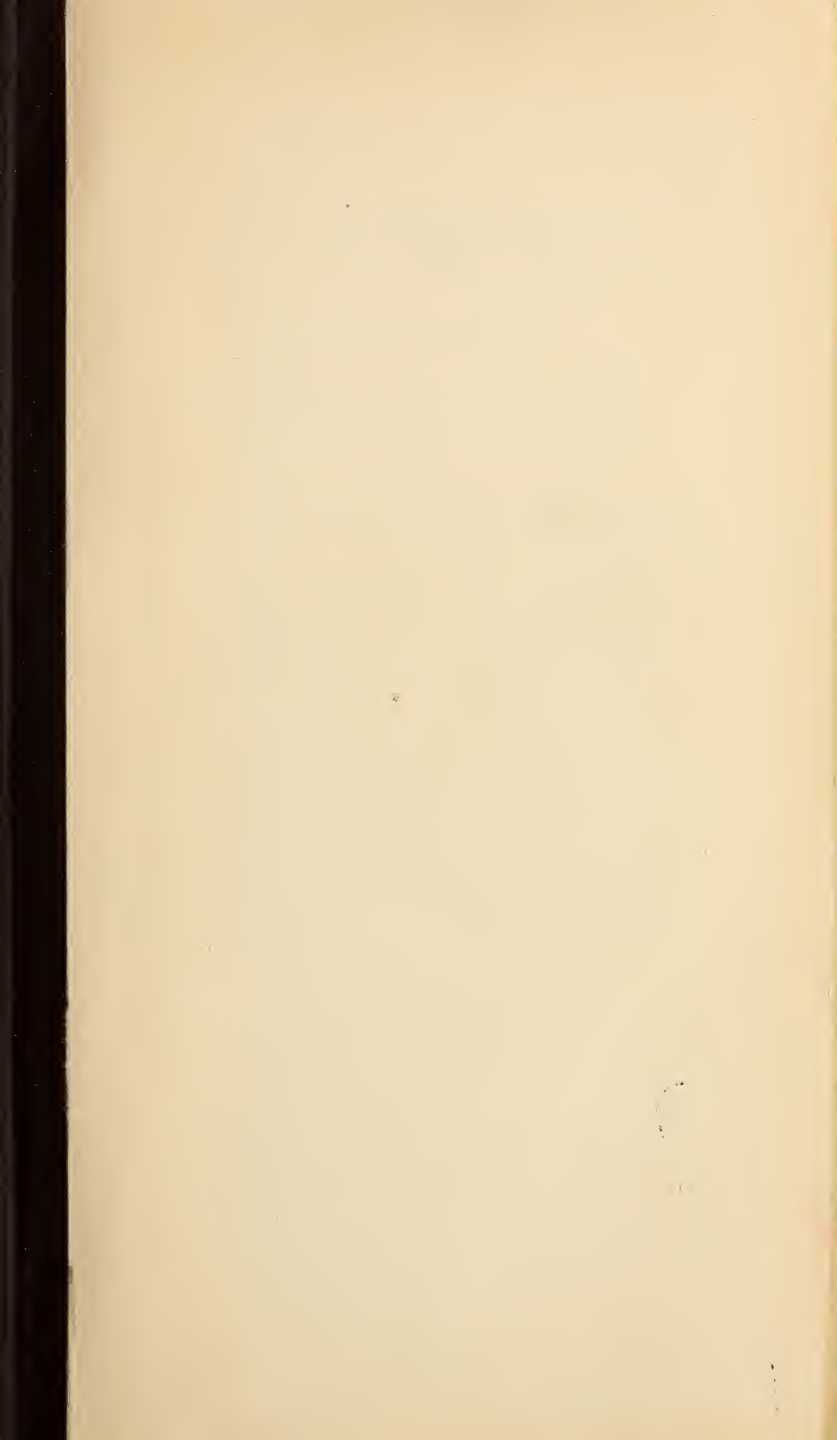


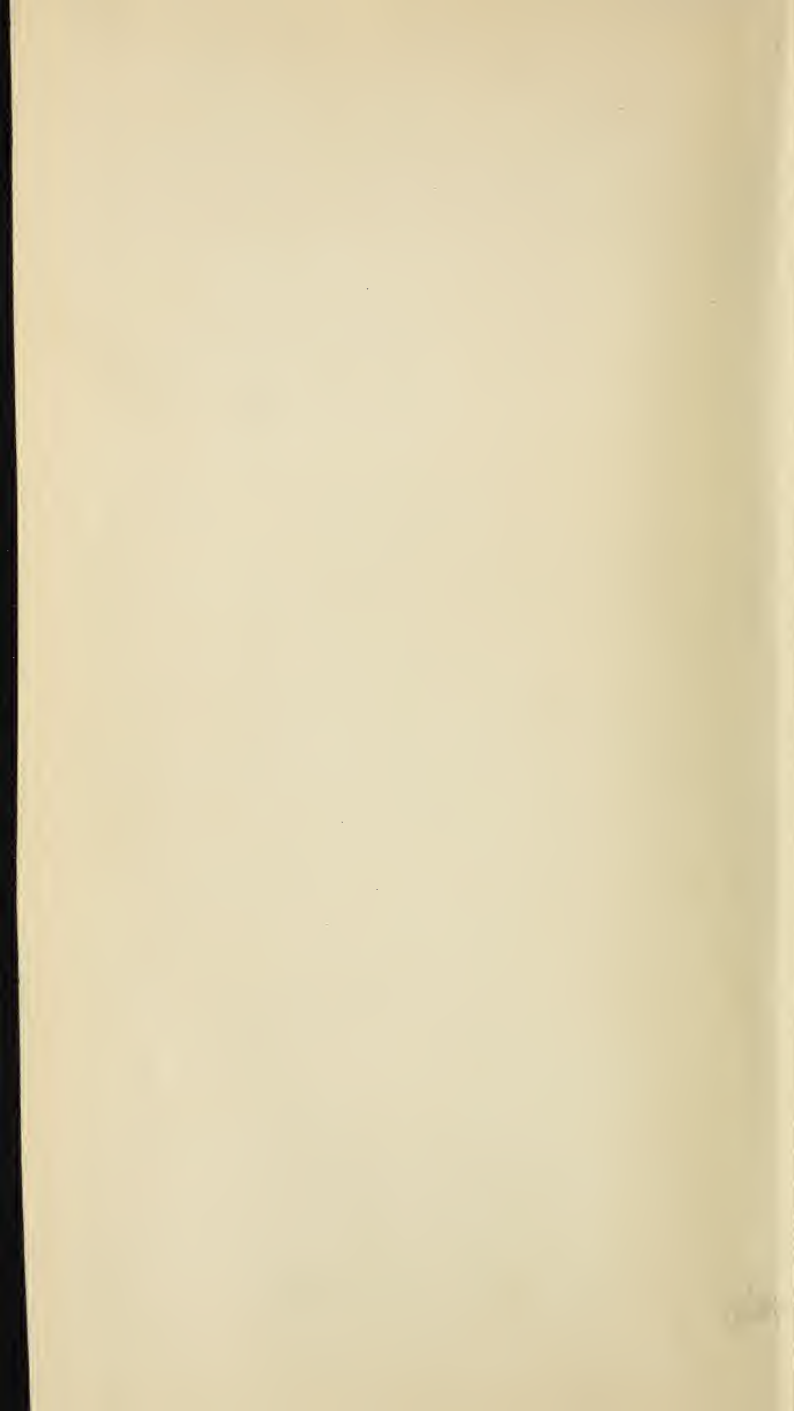




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# THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CASTE;

BEING AN INQUIRY INTO

## THE EFFECTS OF CASTE

ON THE

INSTITUTIONS AND PROBABLE DESTINIES

OF THE

ANGLO-INDIAN EMPIRE.

BY

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a translation of it.

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TO  
THE REV. CHARLES WEBB LE BAS,

IN WHOSE HONOUR A PRIZE FOR

ENGLISH LITERATURE

WAS FOUNDED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

*This Essay*

IS WITH PERMISSION HUMBLY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.



## LE BAS PRIZE.

---

As the circumstances which gave rise to the foundation of the Le Bas Prize (which was awarded to the following Essay in 1851) at the University of Cambridge, are probably unknown to the generality of readers, the subjoined notice may not be uninteresting.

In December 1843, the Rev. Charles Webb Le Bas, who had been Principal of the Honourable East India Company's College at Haileybury for more than thirty years, resigned. On the occasion of his health being proposed by the Chairman of the Court of Directors, he stated, that his motive was "a firm persuasion that it had become his duty as an honest man, to render up his trust into younger and more able hands." Such conduct, such motives, as noble as they are rare, need no praise of ours.

In the speech in which he pathetically bade farewell to all connected with the College, he incidentally made use of the following words, without the slightest

expectation that they would ever travel beyond the four walls within which they were uttered :—" To my position here, and to my long continuance in it, I owe the ability to say, that I have been known—*perhaps I might presume to add, that I am not entirely unremembered*—among all the individuals, with no very considerable exceptions, who now form the body of your civil service, throughout the whole length and breadth of your Eastern Empire."

The words in italics found their way to India ; there they flew abroad like wildfire, and the result was a subscription for founding something, as a testimonial of the esteem with which Mr. Le Bas was justly regarded by all who had been under his charge, and for perpetuating the memory of his services. A fund, amounting to about 1,920*l.* three per cent. consols, was ultimately offered to the University of Cambridge for founding an annual prize, to be called in honour of Mr. Le Bas, the *Le Bas Prize*, for the best English Essay on a subject of general literature, such subject to be occasionally chosen with reference to the history, institutions, and probable destinies and prospects of the Anglo-Indian Empire.

This munificent offer was accepted, and the Prize was subjected to the following regulations, which were confirmed by Grace of the Senate, Nov. 22, 1848 :—

" 1. That the Le Bas Prize shall consist of the annual interest of the above-mentioned fund, the

Essay being published at the expense of the successful Candidate.

“ 2. That the Candidates for the Prize shall be, at the time when the subject is given out, Bachelors of Arts under the standing of M. A.; or Students in Civil Law or Medicine, of not less than four, or more than seven years' standing, not being graduates in either faculty, but having kept the exercises, necessary for the degree of Bachelor of Law or Medicine.

“ 3. That the subject for the Essay shall be selected, and the Prize adjudicated by the Vice-Chancellor, and two other members of the Senate, to be nominated by the Vice-Chancellor, and approved by the Senate at the first Congregation after the tenth day of October in each year.

“ 4. That the subject shall be given out in the week preceding the division of the Michaelmas Term in each year, and the Essays sent in before the end of the next ensuing Easter Term.”

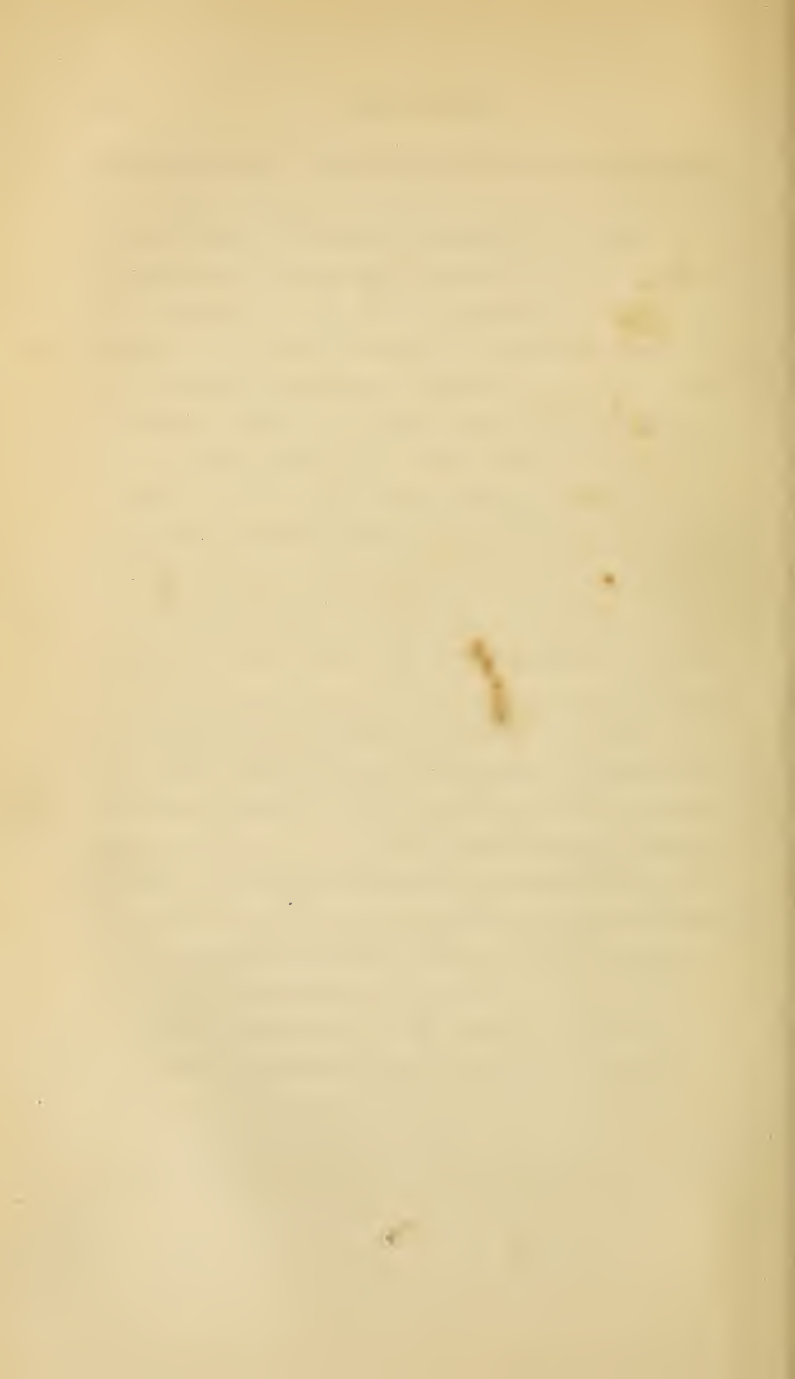
The following are the names of those who have already obtained the Prize:—

1849—C. B. Scott, B. A. Trinity College.

1850—B. F. Westcot, B. A. Trinity College.

1851—B. A. Irving, B. A. Emmanuel College.

1852—B. A. Irving, B. A. Emmanuel College.





## P R E F A C E.

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WHEN we consider that in India and the adjacent islands, not much less than one-fourth of the population of the whole world, is dependent upon Great Britain for prosperity and good government, the ignorance of the generality of persons in this country upon all affairs connected with our Eastern possessions is something astounding. Every idea concerning them is loose and unconnected. That their inhabitants are idolaters and burn their widows—that many Europeans have there gained large fortunes by very questionable means, and have returned home with ruined constitutions—that we have gained numerous victories over the natives, and are now waging an expensive war with the King of Burmah—are the confined notions of those distant regions, possessed by the mass of Englishmen. Whilst the majority of the educated know a little about Plassy and Assaye, and were once pretty well acquainted with the triumphs of

Bacchus beyond the Indus, and Alexander's victory over Porus.

As the object of an essay is not so much to furnish information on any subject, as to discuss what is already known, I have to regret this neglect of Indian affairs, which gives me few readers, and still fewer who can appreciate the justice or injustice of my remarks. These have been the result of considerable reading, and a careful examination of both sides of every question.

In regard to caste many misconceptions have prevailed, the effects of which have too often manifested themselves in the course of policy pursued by this country towards the Hindoos. The tendency of those enactments in which its regulations have been regarded to an unbecoming degree has, in general, been to retard the progress of civilization and social improvement in India. The conclusion has been arrived at, whether rightly or not time may show, that an undue importance has been given to the prejudices of caste, in regard to both the political and religious improvement of that country. That our missionaries more especially have too often misunderstood its spirit, and have thought it their duty to render it an antagonist where it might, with the most perfect propriety, have been employed as their most valuable ally.

Though the nature of the subject has confined me within narrow limits, the requisite researches have

brought before me many points connected with India, which, though of vast importance, have not been touched upon, as irrelevant to the subject. In the licence of a preface, however, I cannot forbear from calling the attention of those into whose hands this work may fall, to a few facts which at the present moment, when we are on the point of again legislating for that country, ought to occupy the attention of Englishmen.

I would direct their mind to the historic fact, that commercial, and in consequence, political greatness have ever fallen to the lot of those nations, which have engaged extensively in trade with the distant East. That India and her dependencies have immense resources, mineral and otherwise, undeveloped ; that she could at the same, or even less expense, supply us with tea, sugar, coffee, and many other necessities of life and articles of luxury, which we import in immense abundance from other regions. That India is the native country of the cotton plant, and even the more valuable species might still be grown there, in almost sufficient abundance to meet the demand of our manufacturers. That to effect this the introduction of capital, the encouragement of trade, the construction of roads, railways, and canals, as well for traffic as irrigation, are necessary. That the introduction of steam as a motive power has now-a-days become the grand agent of civilization.

We would draw attention to the fact, that Free Trade has had in India a longer trial than in our own country ; that its results have been such as were expected ; that it is a policy which deserves our confidence, and should be extended to the internal as well as external trade of the Peninsula.

That the cause of education is making rapid progress with the happiest results ; that by this means the natives will be best prepared for a constitutional form of government, which is, and should be, the grand object of all our legislation.

That centralization has been carried to an undue extent, and the natives too much excluded from positions of trust and confidence ; that to interest them in our rule, and to gain a clear conception of Indian affairs ourselves, will be the safest means of ensuring a vigorous government in India, and of knitting together more firmly those bands of mutual advantage, which have so long enabled a few thousand Englishmen to exact a willing obedience from the numerous and powerful races of Indostan.

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THE  
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CASTE.

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CHAPTER I.

CASTE AS IT IS IN THEORY, ACCORDING TO THE  
CODE OF MENU—CASTE AS IT PREVAILS AT THE  
PRESENT DAY.

“ Plus on réfléchit, plus on observe, et plus on se convainc de la fausseté de la plupart de ces jugemens portés sur une nation entière par quelques écrivains, et adopté sans examen par les autres.”

*L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin, par de Jouy.*

FROM the remotest period, contemplated either by history or even tradition, India has ever been the region of the strange and marvellous. The land, whose unnumbered inhabitants were not more celebrated for their riches and power than they were illustrious for their learning and philosophy; the land, where rivers of peerless magnitude rolled down golden sands—where mountains teemed with gems of pure

light—where fertile plains poured forth the gifts of Ceres with unremitting generosity. Such are our earliest accounts of India. It was the land of all that was paradoxical and anomalous. Though itself abounding with precious metals, its trade required a continual stream of gold and silver to flow thither, and yet aggrandized every nation which engaged in it.\* Its inhabitants, though surrounded by wealth, were patterns of frugality. Its men, though born under the enervating influence of a tropical sky, possessed the most indomitable resolution. Its women, though paragons of all that is mild and affectionate, at the command of superstition assumed a sternness of character alien to their sex.

Such are the accounts which have been constantly rousing the interest of western nations, and have given such a complexion to our ideas of India, that even yet, spite of our intimate acquaintance with every portion of that vast peninsula, the picture still glitters, as it did when Sir John Mandeville, Rubruquis, or Marco Polo, astonished Europe with the wild stories concerning it, which they had respectively collected in Persia, Tartary, and China. Our ideas are still tinged with the marvellous and the romantic; we readily credit circumstances which would otherwise be rejected, except on the most incontrovertible evidence; and we often too little regard those facts which demonstrate the real character of the country and its people. On no subject, perhaps, have greater mis-

\* Robertson's India—*passim*.

conceptions prevailed than on that of *caste*, whose effects on the institutions and probable destinies of our Indian Empire we propose investigating.

Some\* have represented it as a salutary division of society, the religious observance of which early raised India to a high pitch of civilization, and amidst all her revolutions preserved her from relapsing into barbarism. Others have pronounced it a baneful ordinance, which has cramped the vigour of the Hindoo in every age; which has debased his intellect, and introduced into his character that indolent apathy, for which he is remarkable even among Asiatics. Others, again will tell us that it has filled the people with feuds, and jealousies, and hatred—that it has smothered every social feeling, severed every bond of fellowship, and that in consequence it has placed the country at the mercy of every invader. It has been remarked, as an historical fact, that of all who have made the attempt, none ever failed in establishing their supremacy over the whole or part of Indostan. Others, again, whose residence in the East has been chiefly confined to Calcutta,† and who have had but few opportunities of examining the character of caste in other parts of the country, will represent it as little more than that spirit which, in England, leads our domestics to assert, with ridiculous tenacity, the rights of their respective stations. They will represent it as

\* Abbe Dubois, &c.

† In regard to matters of opinion, Calcutta bears nearly the same relation to India that Paris does to France.



this spirit, stretched to its utmost limits, and made respectable by the feelings of religion, by the injunctions of Vedas and the Shasters.

Since, then, opinions so different have been formed concerning caste it will obviously be necessary, before tracing its effects, to examine clearly in what we consider it to consist—to examine its character, not merely as observed in this or that particular province or town, but as exhibited throughout the whole of India. Nor shall we always limit our attention to that country. We hold that though caste has always been developed there more fully than in any other region of the world, yet that it is not by any means confined to Indostan; that it arises from a natural propensity of man to establish grades in society, which, though always prominent there, has at different times, even in other countries, exhibited some of the strongest lines of its character.

Ranks and degrees, order and regularity, are essential to the well-being of every community. The regulations of caste are nothing else than these, carried to an excess of refinement. It may be the part of a great and noble mind to free itself, in regard to this subject, from minute scrupulosity, yet no one can entirely release himself from its trammels. Its existence depends not upon the will of individuals: it is a fundamental principle of society itself, which is in no small degree held together by its senseless prejudices. How rarely do we find a man who can completely divest himself of the consequence attaching to



his rank, so as (if even the expression be not absurd) . to mingle with his inferiors on terms of equality.

The prejudices of caste belong to *organized* society. We find them strongest among such nations as have long existed in peace and prosperity. Where communities are in process of formation, or where they are rent by internal divisions, its force is least. Hence in revolutions and political disruptions, when all the elements of society are jumbled together, it disappears. In the infancy of a nation or colony its existence is barely perceptible.

But to return to our subject—*caste as it is found in India*. The general account of this matter, which has been given with little variation, as applicable to nearly the whole of that country, by all who have noticed it from the days of Alexander down to the present time, represent it, rather as it is described in the sacred books of the Hindoos, than as it really existed among the people. This account has been gained, for the most part, from the laws of Menu and the Vedas,\* which contemplate a state of things which never did, and, I think we may venture to say, never could exist, not merely in India, but among any people. It has been drawn more from the commentaries of intolerant pundits, who were self-conceited Bramins, puffed up with a most absurd and visionary idea of their own sanctity and importance, than from a consideration of the real circumstances and condition of the people. To these sources however, and to the information fur

\* In the Code of Menu continual reference is made to the Vedas.

nished to Sir William Jones, the translator of the "Laws of Menu," by the most celebrated of the Hindoo pundits or jurists, the framers of our Anglo-Indian Code have referred on this, as on many other important points.\*

The tone, too, which these sacred works would impart to Hindoo feelings, though not existing in its fullest extent, does nevertheless produce its effect; just as in Europe the spirit of chivalry still lives in our sentiments and institutions, though chivalry itself, with its romance, its heroes, its tournaments, and its errantry, has long since vanished. Though the caste of the Vedas, with all its minute regulations and awful punishments, does not prevail, yet it is in a great measure owing to the ordinances contained in those works, that caste has possessed its extraordinary power, and endured for so long a period. We will, then, in the first place describe it as it is *exhibited in the Code of Menu*, and the ancient Vedas to which reference is there so constantly made; then we will notice its *actual character* in those parts of India, with which our conquests have made us best acquainted.†

The whole of Hindoos are represented by Menu as divided into four principal classes—the *sacerdotal*, the *military*, the *industrious*, and the *servile*.

\* *E.g.* In regard to the ownership of the soil, and the respective rights of the *ryots* and *zemindars*.

† The account is chiefly taken from Elphinstone's "History of India." He has taken it almost word for word from Sir W. Jones' translation of the Code of Menu.

The first of these—the *Bramins*—are said at the moment of creation to have issued from the mouth of Brahma.

The second—the *Cshatrya*, or Chuttree—from his arm.

The third—the *Vaisya*, or Bais—from his thigh; and—

The fourth—the *Sudras*, or Sooders—from his foot.

According to which allegory, the Hindoos have assigned the priesthood and the work of legislation to the Bramins; the Cshatrya fill the executive departments, and are also the military tribe; the Vaisyas are to be employed in trade and commerce; whilst the Sudras are to devote themselves to servile employments, and more especially to serve the Bramins with the most unwearied attention.

The first three classes, though by no means equal, are yet admitted into one pale. They join in certain rites, to which great importance is attached throughout the code. They are the community for whose government the laws are formed. Whilst the fourth class are mere outcasts, and no further considered than as they contribute to the advantage of the superior castes.

The Bramin is said to be the chief of all created beings. The world and all in it are his; the rest of mortals enjoy life through him. By his imprecations he could destroy kings with all their troops, and elephants, and pomp. He could form other worlds,

and even give life to new gods and mortals. In accordance with this, their books are full of the accounts of heavenly beings vanquished in contests with the most insignificant of their class. Indra, when cursed by one of them, was hurled from his own heaven, and compelled to animate a cat.\* Hence the Bramin is to be treated with the most profound respect, even by kings. His life and person are protected by the severest laws in this world, and the most tremendous denunciations for the next. He is exempt from capital punishment; his own offences are treated with singular lenity; whilst all offences against him are punished with terrible severity. But with all these privileges, to the Bramin no land is assigned. He is to live on alms. He is especially forbidden to live *by service*. His life is to be one of laborious study, and of contemplative retirement.

Though he is enjoined to refrain from all sensual enjoyments, and avoid all wealth that may impede his reading the Vedas, yet he is not in general by any means required to subject himself to fasts or needless severities. All that is necessary is that his life should be temperate, and his mind occupied in the prescribed observances. Although he is debarred from the pursuit of ambition, many offices of the highest importance are to belong to him alone. Kings must have Bramins for their counsellors; by Bramins they are to be instructed in policy, as well as in justice and in all learning.

\* Elphinstone, p. 97.

The code of Menu would appear at one time to be contemplating a former condition of the Bramins, which it still regards as the model for their conduct ; at another time, their condition, when encroached upon by the temptations of power. Hence, notwithstanding the frugality, sobriety, and disregard of riches, which is so rigorously enjoined, the property of Bramins is well protected by penal regulations. Punishments, as severe as they are extraordinary, await the wretch who steals their gold or injures their cattle. It is especially incumbent upon virtuous men and upon kings to support them with liberality. Every ceremony of religion involves feasts and presents to the Bramins. By gifts to them penances the most severe may be commuted. A Bramin finding a treasure keeps the whole of it ; if it is found by another person the king takes it, but must give one-half to the Bramins. On failure of heirs, the property of others escheats to the king ; but that of Bramins is divided among their class. In general they are to be exempt from taxation ; and if, notwithstanding all these privileges, any of their members fall into poverty, their maintenance devolves upon the chief of the State. The first part of a Bramin's life is to be devoted to an unremitting study of the Vedas, the performance of servile offices for his preceptor, to providing the logs for sacrifice, and to begging from door to door.

The second quarter he discharges the ordinary duties of a Bramin, lives with his wife, reads and teaches the Vedas, sacrifices and assists others to sacrifice, be-



stows alms and accepts gifts, shuns all frivolous amusements, "clean and decent, his hair and beard clipped, his passions subdued, his mantle white, his body pure, with a staff and a copy of the Vedas in his hand, and bright golden rings in his ears," he leads a studious and decorous life.

The third portion of his life he must spend in the woods, as an anchorite. Clad in bark, or in the skin of the black antelope, he lives without a fire or mansion, wholly silent, and feeding on roots and fruits.

In the last period of his earthly existence he is nearly as solitary and abstracted as the third; but he is now released from external forms and mortifications. With equanimity and mental delight he spends the rest of his time in meditating on the Divinity, until at length he quits the body, "as a bird leaves the branch of a tree, at pleasure."

The *Cshatryas*, or *military class*, bear something of a sacred character. Though far from being on an equality with the Bramins, they are still treated with honour. It is acknowledged that the sacerdotal order cannot prosper without the military, or the military without the sacerdotal; the prosperity of both, therefore, as well in this world as in the next, is made to depend on their cordial union. Though in an inferior degree to the Bramins, they still enjoy great inequality in criminal law, in comparison with the two lower castes. Their duty is to give alms, to sacrifice, to read the Veda, to shun the allurements of sensual gratification, and, above all, to defend the people. Hence

they are to monopolize the military profession : kings and all officers of Government are to be taken from this tribe. Though Bramins are to draw up and interpret laws, they are carefully excluded from administering them; the executive government is vested in the Cshatryas alone.

The *Vaisyas*, or *mercantile class*, are enjoined sacrifice and reading of the Veda ; but their grand duties are to keep herds of cattle, to carry on trade, to lend on interest, and cultivate the soil. Hence they are to turn their attention to practical knowledge. They must understand the breeding of cattle, must be thoroughly acquainted with all commodities and soils, with the productions and wants of other countries, with various dialects and languages, and with whatever else has direct or indirect reference to purchase and sale. In one word, they are to be *perfect men of business*.

The duty of the *Sudras*, or *lowest class*, is to serve the others, and more especially the Bramins. In fact, it is only permitted them, when in want of subsistence, and unable to procure service from that class, to serve a Cshatrya ; or even if that service cannot be obtained, to attend on an opulent Vaisya. They are doomed to suffer a degree of degradation greater than befalls any other class, not actually bondmen. They are unable to improve their condition, forbidden to accumulate property, "lest they should become proud, and give pain to Bramins," and incapable of by any means approaching the dignity of the superior classes. Nor

are their spiritual prospects less clouded. Though devoted to the service of Bramins, they may not open one page of the Veda. Though, by a rigid attendance to the duties of their situation, they may attain to, what is held forth as the climax of their ambition, the approbation of a Bramin, yet no material change can be made in their condition, even by transmigration. As a general rule, each of the classes in times of distress may subsist by the occupations allotted to those beneath it, but must never encroach on the employments of those above it. The Sudra, however, having no class beneath him, may, if other employments fail, subsist by certain handicrafts, especially those of the carpenter, the mason, the painter, or the scribe. His conduct is to be marked with the greatest submissiveness, and that under penalties as severe as they are ridiculous. If he use abusive language to one of a superior class, his tongue is to be slit. If he advise a Bramin about his religious duties, hot oil is to be dropped into his mouth and ears. If he even listen to reproaches against him, hot lead is poured into his ears. Whilst the first part of the compound name of a Bramin shall indicate holiness; that of a Cshatrya, power; that of a Vaisya, wealth; that of the Sudra is to be expressive of contempt; and the penance for killing him is to be the same as for killing a cat, a lizard, a frog, and various other animals.

Again, a Bramin may not assist him in a sacrifice. It is a crime requiring expiation. He must not read the Veda, even to himself, in the presence of a Sudra.



To teach him the law, or instruct him in the mode of expiating sin, would sink the holiest Bramin into the hell, called Asamvrita. Nay, he may not give him even temporal advice, and is frequently forbidden to receive a gift from a Sudra. Though starving, he may not take dry grain from him, nor eat anything cooked by his hand.

Yet, with all these disadvantages, the Sudras were not in general to be slaves, either belonging to the State or private individuals. They were allowed, under certain restrictions, to offer their services to whom they pleased; they could exercise trades on their own account, and could hold property. The persons of themselves and families were protected against even their own masters, and consequently, in some respects, their condition was superior to that of public slaves in the ancient Republics; to that of the Helots of Lacedæmon, the Penestes of Thessaly, or the Gymnesians of Argos; and far more tolerable than that of the serfs of Russia, the villeins of the middle ages, or the African slaves of our own times.

The strong lines of demarcation between the different castes were then, as now, introduced into many of the less important concerns of life; and were guarded by the attention paid to marriage and purity of descent. Mixture of castes, though not absolutely forbidden, in most cases entailed disadvantages on the children; and when a woman of the Braminical class married a Sudra, the offspring became a Chandala, the lowest of mortals.

Such is a brief outline of caste, as it may be gathered from the laws of Menu. That it never, or at any rate never for any length of time, existed under this form, in the absence of all historical evidence, we may, from the nature of the case, safely assert.\* Possibly, under the viziership of some bigoted Bramin, it may have been enforced with many of its absurd regulations and punishments, but the majority are so inconsistent with the welfare of society, and the popular feelings of even an Asiatic, that they never could be in force for any length of time.†

They form, it is true, a part of what has been long reputed Hindoo law, which, in fact, is little more than a collection of dogmas, written at different times by

\* "Jye Sing, the same who built the observatories at Benares and Delhi, about the middle of the 16th century founded Jyepoor. Its uniformity is very striking. It is laid out according to the rules of the Shasters, different quarters being allotted to different castes. One being for the Thakoors or chieftains, another for the Bramins, a third for ordinary Rajpoots, a fourth for Kaits, a fifth for Bunyans or traders, a sixth for Gaowlas or cow-keepers, and a seventh for the palace."—See "Heber's Journey," Vol. iii. p. 415. This apparently militates against the remark in the text. "It will be observed, however, that the arrangement is not that of Menu. It is rather one of tribes than of caste.

+ In the "Toy Cart," the earliest of the Hindu dramas, extravagant veneration for Bramins nowhere appears. In fact, one of them is represented as condemned to death.—Elph. p. 27.

"The four stages of a Bramin's life, and *all that kind of thing*, as described by Menu, and related in Europe, have no existence now."—Campbell's India, p. 42.

"No quadruple division of the whole community exists, and perhaps never did exist."—Richard's India, Vol. i. p. 14.

Bramins, who each wrote what he pleased from the dictates of his own ignorant and intolerant spirit. They appear to have remained, in all ages and in all states, Hindoo as well as Mahometan, a mere dead letter. We would compare them to the illiberal and truculent bulls of Pope Gregory the Seventh and Pius the Fifth, which were never fully adopted even in Popish times and in Popish states; and have been regarded by Romanists themselves rather as curious proofs of the absurd lengths to which uncontrolled priestcraft can advance, than as laws which it ever was, or ever will be, not merely expedient, but even possible, to administer. Such is the light in which we must regard caste, as it is pourtrayed in ancient Sanscrit works, and in the accounts which old Greek writers, and even many modern authors, have given of its regulations.

A pretty general opinion now prevails, that the code of Menu, whose antiquity is indisputable, was not drawn up for the regulation of a particular state under the sanction of its Government.\* Many regard it as the work of some learned man, designed to set forth his idea of a perfect commonwealth under Hindoo institutions, just as Plato, in the Republic, gives us his idea of a model government under Greek institutions. It has been supposed that Menu himself is a mere dramatic personage, brought forward to give life and interest to a didactic composition, just as in the Republic, Plato introduces Socrates, Glaucon, Ce-

\* Elphinstone's Hist. India, p. 11, &c. Date of Code of M. about 900 B.C.

phalus, and others, conversing together, and by this means places his opinions in a more attractive light than was possible in a set treatise. The opening sentences of the work would favour this supposition. It commences, " Menu sat reclined with his attention fixed on one subject, when the divine sages approached him, and, after mutual salutations," &c. &c.\*

Be this as it may, the caste which at present exists throughout the greater part of India is very different from that described in the laws of Menu: though to them it may probably owe a good deal of its stability, and all the *prestige*, which is attached to it among Europeans. The second and third orders do not now exist as separate classes. The very names are unknown, as conveying the original meaning. The people are all comprised in two classes, the Bramins and the Sudras; while at the same time thousands are hardly acquainted with the latter name. Instead of the three twice-born classes, with their inferior divisions, and the Sudras, with some few exceptions, not only the Hindoos, but even the Mussulmans, Jews, Parsees, and Christians, are divided into an almost infinite number of castes.† These, far from being venerable for their antiquity or religious character, partake more of the nature of clubs or associations for

\* See Sir William Jones's Translation. Some have supposed that Menu was Minos, the author of legislation among the Greeks. Others that he is the personification of " mens" or intellect.

† Especially in Bengal. See Shore's Notes on Indian Affairs, Vol. i. p. 534, and Vol. ii. p. 473.

mutual support and familiar intercourse. In many cases they are dependent on the occupation of their members;\* in others they have their rise from whatever trivial cause may happen to distinguish men from their fellows. The principal of those castes, which have been described by Mr. Colebrooke,† in the fifth volume of the “Asiatic Transactions,” have, for the most part, had their origin either in being species of guilds, or in schism and separation from some other caste. Their specific denominations are often derived from the province in which the caste first had its rise; sometimes from the name of the founder, and is not unfrequently due to mere accident. Thus, for instance, the Coolies, or bearers of burdens, are supposed to derive their name from that of the aboriginal race, the Calantiæ of ancient authors, who were conquered by the Hindoos, and remains of whom are still to be found in Guzerat and the peninsula of Cutch. The Kaits, or writer caste, are said to have been originally a tribe from Rajpootana, where the parent stock still exists.

From these causes the castes are now so numerous that, in the Bengal Presidency alone, they would probably amount to some hundreds; almost every district containing some, which are not known in the adjacent province. Their rules are so various, and depend so much upon preconceived ideas, and the connection of

\* In some places the Jats call themselves of the caste of *zemindars*, or landholders.—See Campbell's India, p. 92.

† His description is chiefly taken from the *Jatimala*.



feeling in the mind, that even to Europeans, who have mixed longest with the people, caste is a mysterious subject. Among the lowest classes, and more especially among the servants of the English in Calcutta, caste has degenerated into a fastidious tenacity of the rights and privileges of station, and an unmeaning observance of ridiculous regulations. The man who sweeps your room would resolutely refuse to take an empty cup from your hand.\* He whose business it is to groom your steed would feel himself aggrieved if requested to mow a little grass for its sustenance.

There are an infinite number of such petty absurdities, the neglect of which is sufficient to make a set exclude one of their members from their mess, his reinstatement being in general easily effected at the price of a dinner, or some frugal entertainment, given to the members of his class.

*Caste no longer ties a man down to follow his father's business.*† Most men certainly do follow the occupation to which they have been brought up. This, however, is not peculiar to India. It is the case with every people. A man is educated in his father's shop or office, in all the minutiae of his business; his mind becomes accustomed to it, his business friends are of avail there, and perhaps in no other line of commerce; and in India, as elsewhere, when the father dies his

\* See Shore's Notes, Vol. ii. p. 472.

† And probably never did. Rickards (Vol. i. p. 14) says "The ordinary occupations of life were at all times open to the whole of them."

son commonly succeeds to his business: but caste no more involves obligation to do so in India than it does in England. If we except the priesthood, which now chiefly belongs to the Bramins (and even in this point great latitude is allowed) caste\* has not necessarily any effect on the line of life in which a man embarks.

There is nothing to prevent a common shopkeeper, or *bunnea*, from becoming, if his affairs prosper, a wealthy merchant. There is nothing to prevent a merchant of high rank from sinking into the most menial occupation.† Men of all castes have held commissions in our army. You may constantly see, as in England, one brother following the hereditary vocation, whilst another enters the army, hires himself as a domestic servant, or strikes out some other new course of life. How little occupation depends on caste may be seen from the following remark of a writer on India:—“ Among the crew of our boat, consisting of ten men, were actually found the following variety of castes:—two‡ Rajpoots, four Kuhars, one Kisan, one Goojur, one Bhat, and only one regular mullah, or boatman, by profession.”

*It is doubtful, too, whether caste had ever practically*

\* See Shore's Notes on India, Vol. ii. p. 473. The priesthood is not assigned to the Bramins by the Code of Menu.

† Ibid, Vol. ii. p. 474.

‡ The names of the different castes, if translated, would convey to an Englishman just as little meaning as the names of English sects or societies translated into Hindostanee. It would be impossible, in the latter language, to find terms to express such words as Methodist, Baptist, Protestant, High Churchman, &c., &c.



any greater *influence on the rise of men in the scale of society* in India than in any other country—not even when the Hindoos were governed by native princes, when the kingdoms of Malwa, of Canage, and Guzerat were in their heyday, before even the Mus-sulmans set foot within the Peninsula. Since their appearance, *i.e.* within the period of authentic history, many have been the instances of men of the lowest classes attaining sovereign power. Most of the Mahratta Rajahs are Sudras; and yet, at a period when the English were only known as foreign merchants at Calicut, in Malabar, and some other seaports, they fought their way to their respective thrones against Mahometans, or whatever opposed them. Salivahana,\* who flourished in the first century of the Christian era, and was their oldest, as well as most powerful monarch, is said to have been the son of a potter. Yet neither he, nor any other Peishwa, ever found the high-caste Bramin ill-disposed to be his minister, or join in council with a Sudra Rajah. In fact,† the Mahratta chiefs were usually so illiterate, that Bramins managed their affairs, and throughout the whole of their country they are still the great men of business, occupying the position of the Kaits and Parsees in other states. The founders of the families of Holcar and Scindia were both Sudras, whilst Trimbuk-jee‡ was a Bramin of the highest class. The great family of Rastia, in the Mahratta country, were

\* Elphinstone, p. 224.

+ Ibid. p. 545.

‡ Heber's Journey, Vol. i. p. 405.

Bramins, then became extensive bankers, and lastly military leaders. Many other examples to the same effect might be quoted. So that it is obvious that it depends much more upon the wealth and power of the parties, than upon their caste, which shall serve the other.

It is impossible to define all the particulars of which caste takes cognizance; when its influence is so extensive as to enter, more or less, into the minutest actions and most intricate circumstances of life. All authors, from Eratosthenes downwards, have written concerning it, not as it really existed among the people, but, as they found it described in Shasters, in the Dherma Purana, and the commentaries of *pundits*. Nothing, however, gives an impression of the real state of things more false. The English in point of caste are on an equality with the lowest Sudras, and yet they never find a difficulty in hiring men of high caste to perform menial services.

In the South of India\* the Bramins apply themselves to cookery, in which art they attain great proficiency. Individuals of any caste may, without pollution, eat what has been prepared at their hands. On this account, as well as for the *éclat* of entertaining a domestic of such reputed rank, they are in great request with the opulent Sudras: this, too, notwithstanding the numerous incongruities which arise therefrom. The master, being of an inferior class, must not touch the vessels which the domestic uses for

\* See Dubois' India, p. 176.

his own food. Nor, on the other hand, will the prejudices of the domestic suffer him to withdraw from the table the plates which he had served up. What he has prepared is pure for his master; but what his master has touched is polluted to him. In short, although there are capacities as, for instance, those of *mater* or *kitmutgar*,\* in which no Bramin, and, probably, no Hindoo of high caste would serve, it is far from unusual for those who have acquired wealth to entertain men of superior caste as their servants.

In what then does Hindoo caste consist? We would liken it to what, as similar in its feelings and effects, has also been denominated caste among Europeans. To a certain extent at least they both spring from the same origin, just as they both for the most part manifest themselves in the same things—in eating and in forming matrimonial alliances between families. In Europe, however, caste is simply a *social distinction*; often not even that. It is received as a necessary evil, and condemned, if not in itself, at any rate in its tendencies, by our moralists, and by the opinion and example of those who are regarded with universal respect. In India, on the other hand, it is professedly a *religious institution*, upheld by sacred books, and protected by every argument which can be drawn from antiquity and prevalence. In this consists the great difference. This it is which makes it so important, which renders it so strongly prevalent, not as in England among the higher classes, but in every corner of Indostan,

\* *I.e.* sweeper or footman.

and which has preserved some of its more arbitrary regulations unimpaired for many centuries.

In England a species of caste enters into all the most ordinary relations of life. It forms distinctions in society, and gives rise to habits and customs which a stranger to our manners and sentiments would be years in perceiving, and the reasons of which it would be impossible to explain to one lacking the train of thought necessary for their appreciation. Such in a much greater degree, owing to the greater importance of caste, as a division of society, enforced not merely by popular opinion, but by civil laws and religious authority, are the sentiments of Englishmen with reference to Hindoo caste. In both cases its practical operation is most extensive and important, and yet in its details, and in its general rules, so minute, so intricate, and in many cases so contradictory, so anomalous and so ridiculous, as to defy every attempt at generalization.

In some instances it is dependent on moral character, in others on the observance of regulations apparently the most unmeaning. Respectability weighs nothing when put in comparison with it. He would forfeit it who should be found eating with one of another caste, however excellent or virtuous such a one might be. To the uninitiated its rules are intricate and absurd. Its peculiarities are incomprehensible to those unacquainted with the sequence of ideas from which they arise. In the same way there exist among ourselves many conventionalities, independent

of rank, and unrecognized by law, which keep different classes asunder, and whose rules are commonly mistaken by foreigners.

Suppose, by way of illustration, that a gentleman of consequence engaged in making a purchase, feels thirsty. He asks the shop-boy for a glass of ale or water. If he drink it in the shop all is well; but if he go into the back room, and there drink his beverage, seating himself on one chair whilst the boy seated himself on another, he would be considered to have committed an impropriety. *We* understand the difference; but it would probably be impossible for a native of India to do so. He does not possess the turn of thought necessary for its comprehension. He would probably say, if the gentleman may quench his thirst in a tradesman's house, what possible difference can it make whether seated or standing, whether in one room or the other? This is precisely the same with us, in our attempts to understand many of the peculiarities of Hindoo customs. We have not the train of thought and association of ideas requisite; and we in equal astonishment ask, "If you eat bread prepared by that man what possible difference can it make to eat boiled rice which he has cooked?" or, "You make no objection to such a person handling prepared pastry, how can his touch render impure another sort of food?"

High feelings of ancestral pride will even yet make the Highlander endure the greatest hardships in preference to labours which he falsely deems degrading.



With disdain which would be ridiculous, were it not pitiable, the poorest peasant, who with difficulty furnishes himself with necessary sustenance, and around whose home poverty hovers in every form, will yet spurn with contempt the labours of the loom or the craft of the artizan. How unreasonable this would appear to a Hindoo! To us, familiar with many previous considerations, such conduct, though strange, is still capable of explanation.

Such is the case with caste in India. To a stranger it is one mass of inconsistencies, to a native the most important feature of his society. The foundation of the whole matter rests on self-confidence, and a desire of exalting ourselves in society. This feeling is common to all mankind. Caste, as its offspring, affects all men more or less; but in India it has been carried to its furthest extent, and endued with all the respectability which religion and antiquity could confer.

Our task, then, will be to trace the effects of this tendency in human nature in that country where it has been especially developed, and upon our Anglo-Indian institutions. This, in fact, is the practical question, and not the probable effects of a state of things which are found discussed in the commentaries of an ancient philosopher and would-be politician, and which if they ever existed, have been so long ago exploded, that little or no trace of them can be discerned in any account which we possess of the ancient rulers of the country, and its condition under their

sway, and have most certainly never prevailed during the British occupancy of Indostan.

Our attention, too, must be confined to investigating *the general effects of a general principle*, and not in tracing the influence of its minute details; of the numberless ceremonies, to which in different parts of the peninsula, it has given rise. Such an attempt would be impossible.

We have before observed, that whatever was the case in remote ages, it is certain that within the period of exact history custom has, in respect to caste, deviated widely from the written laws of Menu. The simple regulations of that code, enjoined under such terrible penalties, are in actual practice, replaced by a mass of minute superstitious observances. These are so numerous and intricate, that a description of them would itself form the subject of a large volume. To give the reader some idea of their character we will, at random, select a few of the most prominent. It must be premised, however, that there are rules peculiar to each part of a caste, in addition to those of the caste itself. That others again are local, or peculiar to different families. That\* they are different, and often at variance with one another in different parts of the peninsula, and can be reduced to no general standard of reason or regularity.

The majority of the people of Bengal and Orissa will not eat meat, though all classes join in eating fish; whilst on the other hand, at Bickanee, fish is held in

\* Abbé Dubois India, Pref., p. 16.



the utmost abhorrence. Nearly all Hindoos so rigorously refrain from animal food, and look upon swine with such especial disgust that, in the great drought of 1770, when it has been calculated that more than one-fourth of the teeming population of Bengal perished of famine, thousands died rather than violate their religious scruples; yet all these, with perhaps the exception of the very highest castes, will eat the flesh of the deer and wild boars, if not killed by their own hands.\* In Kumaon all will eat the short-tailed sheep of the hills, but none will touch one with a long tail.

To the Bramins† all animal food, save that of fishes and kids, is forbidden; yet in some districts they will readily partake of the flesh of any animal whatever, if only, as in the case of other Hindoos, it be not killed by their own hand. The Rajpoots eat fish, mutton, and venison; fowls, beef, and pork are held in abomination. Many castes follow the same rules. With some, however, pork is the favourite diet, beef only is prohibited. Those who shrink from the pollution of eating the flesh of the domestic poultry will eagerly devour that of the jungle-fowl which differs from the game-cock only in size. All Hindoos consider themselves defiled by contact with feathers: among the tribes at the feet of the Himalays, who are in other respects strict Hindoos, this prejudice does not exist. An earthen pot is polluted beyond redemption by

\* Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 489.

† See Shore's India, Vol. i. p. 533, on this subject.

being touched by one of an inferior caste; a metal one suffers no such deterioration.\* Coolies will carry any load, however offensive, upon their heads; bid them carry a man for a few paces, and though it be a matter of life and death, they will answer you, that it is the business of another caste. The writer caste, or tribe of Kaits, have a prejudice against keeping a shop, and they would submit to the lowest description of personal service, in preference to joining as a partner in the wealthiest house in Calcutta. The Rohillas will submit to be flogged within an inch of their lives with a leathern martingale, but to be struck with a whip or cane would be an indelible disgrace, and very likely to be resented with a bullet or a stab. Bramins would be polluted by drinking from the same cup as a Sudra; if, however, the beverage be a species of whey there is no pollution. Spirituous liquors are in general only allowed to the Pariahs. In some parts of Southern India the Bramins partake of them† without scruple. Among the Nairs of Malabar the women enjoy a plurality of husbands. Among the Totiyars, on the same coast, those within the degrees of consanguinity possess their wives in common. In Mysore there is a caste in which the mother amputates the two middle fingers up to the second joint at the marriage of her eldest daughter. Many castes are only to be known from one another by the cut and colour of their clothes, the shape and arrangement of their trinkets,

\* See Heber's Journey, Vol. ii., p. 24.

† See Abbé Dubois on India, chap. i.

or some other equally frivolous and unimportant distinction.

Such are some of the regulations and prejudices connected with Hindoo caste. When we have added that to all these a certain amount of religious respect is supposed to have been originally due, the reader will have some idea of its anomalous and heterogeneous character.

Many other examples of its minor details we might produce; but what effect can these have had on our institutions? Surely, none; though the spirit which produced by its abuse *these* may also have affected *them*. It is the effects of this abstract spirit which we must notice, omitting all details, and confining ourselves to the broad features of the case.

We shall, then, examine its effects as they have been seen.

First. On the *Political, Military, and Civil Institutions* of our Indian Empire.

Secondly. On its *Social and Domestic* Institutions.

Thirdly. On the *Moral and Religious Character* of the People.

Fourthly. We shall notice how it affects their *Conversion to Christianity*.

Lastly. We shall consider—

Its *probable effects on the future destinies* of that Empire.

## CHAPTER II.

EFFECTS OF CASTE ON THE POLITICAL, MILITARY  
AND CIVIL INSTITUTIONS OF OUR INDIAN EMPIRE.

IN one point of view there exists a remarkable difference between the history of Europeans and Asiatics. In that of Western nations it is the exploits of the people, that are, for the most part, described. We are made acquainted with their feelings and sentiments, and the impulse which these gave to their internal as well as external policy. Individually, as a portion of the people, we read our own history and recognize our own feelings in those which animated them. We draw deductions and acquire instruction from their failures or success. Princes derive all the importance, which attaches to their reign, from the habits and power of their subjects. If otherwise so remarkable that history for a time centres in their person, it is either because opposed to their people, or with dictatorial power heading their armies in or against foreign invasion.

With the East this is not the case. There history is a narrative of the deeds of princes, not of the sentiments of nations. We read not so much of the constitutional struggles of myriads, as of the diplomacy, the treachery, the crimes, and the ambition of a few ; and history becomes most interesting when it enters most minutely into the personal habits and feelings of an illustrious monarch. This is especially the case with India. The Ramayana, the Mahabarat, and the Puranas, make us to a considerable extent acquainted with its history, fabulous or otherwise, from the earliest periods ; whilst Ferishta and Persian writers in abundance give us the events of more modern times. But upon what do they chiefly dwell ? The people are lost sight of, the deeds of princes are alone conspicuous. The whole is one mass of private feuds, of jealousy, of tyranny, of sudden rebellion, and of remorseless punishment ; of the rise of princes and of the fall of dynasties. Occasionally some Chandragupta, or Mahmoud, or Akbar, command our respect for their conquests or legislation. Some Zenghis, or Tamerlane, or Nadir, like a thunderbolt, dart through prosperous kingdoms, and leave desolation behind them. Some Baber or Humayun, with their simple memoirs and romantic adventures, interest the milder feelings of the mind. Yet, throughout the whole of their history, we look in vain for a Tacitus to tell us, "*Qualis status urbis, quæ mens exercituum, quis habitus provinciarum, quid in toto imperio validum, quid ægrum fuerit, ut*

non modo casus eventusque rerum, qui plerumque fortuiti sunt, sed ratio enim causæque noscantur.”\*

We look in vain for a description of the effects of minor circumstances upon the feelings, the actions and institutions of the early invaders of Indostan. We know that then, as now, the same intricate rules of caste prevailed, yet we find little or no notice of its influence on the character of their policy; though it must, in one form or other, have come in contact with every act of legislation. Strange as it may seem, its influence was so subtle and inscrutable, that, either from ignorance of its character, or from despair of accurately defining it, they have altogether neglected to notice even its existence.

It may happen occasionally to have forced itself on their attention, when the overweening influence of some particular class may have produced a sudden political movement. As, for instance, when Khusru, the vizier of Mobarik Khilji,† entirely surrounded himself with those of his own caste, by their means overthrew the power of his master, and exterminated the house of Khilji. These, however, are solitary events, singular in their causes and effects. They have little or no connection with that silent, never-failing influence which caste must have always exerted on the character of the people and the institutions of their conquerors. Certain it is that its effects were rarely direct, and are, if anywhere, to be

\* Hist. i. 4.

† See Elphinstone's India, p. 348.



found (as Burke would say) not in the "swaggering major, but in the little minor of circumstances."

As with preceding conquerors of Indostan, so with the English; caste is not to be found directing our diplomacy, curbing our designs, or impeding with its niceties our intercourse with the princes of India. Whoever looks for it here may look in vain. Nothing is more certain than that caste has never sensibly affected our intercourse with Hindoo governments, and rarely even the relations of Hindoo states with each other. Yet in minor points its influence can be detected.

The East India Company, for a long time, appeared in the East as merchants, whose continuance at two or three unimportant seaports, depended upon their conciliating the favour of a few of the more powerful native princes; whilst their trade was, in a great measure, founded upon their popularity with the people themselves. After the death of Aurangzib, and the disorders which followed, their influence became more extensive, and was finally confirmed by Clive, at the decisive battle of Plassy; when the whole of Bengal and even the great Mogul himself, were prostrate at their feet. Then could they well afford to neglect any longer paying court to barbarous sovereigns; but though in this point independent, their empire was found to be increased in a greater proportion than their powers of retaining it. A few thousand Europeans at Calcutta and Madras, had now to preserve their dominion over a great part of Malabar, the



Deccan, and the whole plain of the Ganges—over people differing from them in language, in customs, in religion, and in colour. They soon observed that on their popularity and compliance with the wishes of their subjects, a stable empire was alone to be founded. Nor did it long escape their notice, that caste in one form or other existed from Cape Comorin to the feet of the Himalays; from the mouths of the Ganges to those of the Indus; throughout the length and breadth of Indostan; that its minute regulations were regarded with almost religious respect; that its spirit penetrated every native institution, and gave a colour to the simplest actions of life. It was soon obvious that it was an innocent point, on which it would be of advantage to gratify, or rather on which it might be dangerous to offend, native prejudices. To this end Sir William Jones, after an astonishing amount of persuasion, induced some of the most illustrious *pundits* of the day, to furnish him, notwithstanding their religious scruples on the point, with a translation of the Code of Menu, which was supposed, and which they averred, contained the legitimate regulations of Hindoo caste. What a deceptive picture of this institution is there given, we have before noticed. Such as it was, however, it was adopted, and in many particulars credited, by the government and literati\* of the day; and many of the orders of the Board of Directors in England, and Regulations of the Council in India, are careful that its spirit should not be wantonly offended.

\* *E. g.*, Schlegel and Continental writers.

The pretensions of Bramins, and the high respect which had been awarded to them from antiquity, were often regarded in points, in which they ill accorded with the preconceived ideas of Europeans, and in some cases were not neglected even in the courts of justice.

The Cshatryas, as a class, were extinct in the greater part of India, but the Rajpoots of Rajasthan claimed descent from them, and readily found occupation as sepoy, in our armies; whilst the lowest castes, such as Coolies, Maters, Choomars, Mullahs, &c., were for a long time studiously excluded.

Bramins and men of high caste, as Vakeels, or native lawyers, and Moonsiffs or inferior judges, were occupied in the administration of justice; whilst little encouragement was given to the Sudra and the Ryot, to leave the cultivation of the soil, that occupation to which the Code of Menu had devoted him.

Nay, to such lengths was this policy of respecting the prejudices of the natives in regard to caste carried, that the discouragements to conversion to Christianity were numerous. By Government Regulations of 1814, native Christians were debarred from filling any public office of respectability.\* There is on record one instance *at least*, in which a sepoy was actually dismissed from the army, in consequence of embracing Christianity. He was a naick† or corporal, a man of high caste, who under the influence of Mr. Fisher, the clergyman at Meerut, renounced Hinduism. Bishop

\* Regs., 23 and 27.

† Heber's Journey, Vol. ii. p. 280. Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 460.

Heber, who saw him in 1825, describes him as "a tall, plain-looking man, with every appearance of a respectable and well-behaved soldier." His conversion was supposed to be exciting considerable ferment in his corps. On the report of the commanding officer, and after a careless investigation, Government, carrying out its cautious policy of humouring native prejudices, to an almost unjustifiable extent, absurdly, not to say wickedly, disgraced him, by removing him from his regiment, although they still allowed him his pay. So careful are they still not to offend native prejudices on the subject of caste, that the very convicts\* in our gaols are allowed to preserve its distinction. They are not required to labour in what they deem an improper vocation, and are allowed time and space, each to cook his own meals.

In return for this toleration, there are some points on which caste has materially upheld the pretensions of the Company. *It has no idea of popular government.* Its political effects may appear pleasing in the case of the village constituencies (which we shall hereafter mention), and may go far to secure a certain amount of personal liberty, yet have they no tendency to produce for the people at large, that popular form of government, on which the Englishman particularly prides himself, and which, under one form or other, has been

\* This is necessary: many convicts would lie down and die, sooner than break the laws of their caste. It is only two months since a riot occurred at Benares, in consequence of some convicts being set to labour at occupations inconsistent with their caste.

the object of every revolution, among the families of the European or Japhetic race. The Code of Menu contemplates the whole of society, as subject to one head, an absolute monarch, in whom the whole government of the state is vested. He is, it is true, to pay regard to the laws promulgated in the name of the Divinity, he is to be influenced by the advice of Bramins, but he is subject to no legal control by human authority.

The opening of the chapter on government\* employs the boldest political figures to display the irresistible power, the glory, and almost the divinity of a king. This doctrine, so characteristic of all Semitic nations, the institution of caste in nowise invalidates, but even upholds and confirms.

*It obstructs the free exercise of those benevolent feelings which bind man to man.*† The social circle is composed of persons of the same caste, to the careful exclusion of others. No community of feeling exists among different classes of the same people; it arms one class of men against another; gives rise to the greatest degree of pride and apathy, makes every prejudice inveterate and incapable of eradication. With them as with the half civilized Romans of old, *hospes* and *hostis*, stranger and foe,‡ are synonymous. Hence there can be no political amalgamation; everything

\* Chap. VII., Sir William Jones' translation. Elphinstone, p. 19.

† See Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 478. Ward's Hindoos, Vol. i. p. 145, on this subject.

‡ See Cic., Off., Lib. i., Cap. 12.

which is proposed by one party, is viewed with suspicion by others; like the oligarchs and democrats of Grecian cities they stand apart with mutual distrust, everywhere “τὸ ἀντιτάχθαι ἀλλήλοις τῇ γνώμῃ ἀπίστως ἐπὶ πολὺν διήνεγκεν,”\* has been true of Hindoos, as it was of Greeks. This feeling, though it may long have contributed to the stability of our rule, very materially retards the progress of those enlightened principles of our government, by which it is now being attempted to elevate the character of the people, and render them adapted for freer institutions than they at present possess, and perhaps in time for a representative form of government.

From caste, again, has arisen that *want of patriotism* which every writer on India, has noticed as a marked† characteristic of the people. Although they are socially one, they have no political unity, no nationality, no public spirit. “Not only,” says a recent writer‡ on India, “have the Mahometans and Hindoos no political feelings in common, but no two tribes, classes, or castes of Hindoos, pull together in politics.” Much of these sentiments may be, doubtless, attributed to their having lived so long under foreign and despotic governments, but much also is to be ascribed to the benevolent feelings of the mind having, from infancy, been contracted and cramped by the influence of caste.

\* Thucyd., Lib. iii., 83.

† Heber's Journey, Vol. iii. p. 274.

‡ Campbell's India and its Government, p. 62.

To the same cause, too, is to be ascribed that *extreme selfishness*, which induces them to look without sympathy upon the misfortunes of their neighbours. They have large family circles, within which many social virtues exist. Persons who live beyond the range of these are utter aliens. Hence, though no provision on the subject has ever been made by Government, paupers are carefully supported.\* It is incumbent on each family circle to afford subsistence to its own poor, and public relief is never either expected or required. On the other hand, nowhere are the sufferings of strangers treated with more indifference.† The traveller may fall sick by the way, but not a soul will render assistance. If his caste be unknown all will avoid him for fear of pollution. The most horrible crimes, and the most outrageous cruelties, may be, and sometimes are, openly committed, without the least dread of interference. No native, whom it did not personally concern, would ever, for one moment, harbour the idea of laying an information before a magistrate. In cases of daring thefts,‡ where gangs of *decoits* have long been the terror of a neighbourhood, there is very rarely any common effort made for their detection, which is left entirely to those whom it principally concerns. To such a length has this apathy of the natives gone, that *decoitee* has sometimes been

\* Campbell's India and its Government, p. 62.

+ Heber gives many exs. See Journey, Vol. i. p. 352; ii. p. 352; and iii. pp. 261, 264, 355, &c.

‡ Campbell's India, p. 108.



carried on for years, before the authorities became aware of its existence; and even then its detection has long defied the vigilance of our police. So far is this indifference to the sufferings of others, and neglect of all the ties of race and country carried, that a writer\* on India remarks, "If it were the purpose of Government to ravage with fire and sword any particular district, it might be done just as effectually with soldiers raised in that province, as with regiments composed of foreigners. Each man would be anxious to save his own particular village, but he would most likely have no sympathy with its neighbour."

*Caste prevents all zeal in pursuing public benefits.* The ambition and enterprise of individuals is absorbed in the general feelings of their caste, which is a torpid mass, little influenced by the genial spirit of improvement, or the wish of ameliorating its condition. It presents no obstacle to the pretensions or tyranny of a ruler, but after a fashion, by its apathy and stationary nature, confirms his authority. That all men naturally are equal is a doctrine abhorrent to the feelings of a Hindoo; hence he has no idea of universal suffrage, of social fusion, or of any of those political tenets, whose wild extravagances have so often disturbed the peace of western nations, of late have shaken almost every throne of Christendom to its foundations; and which, if they existed in the East, no force or popularity of our Indian government would avail to counteract. His political creed is pre-eminently that verse of

\* Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 417.

Homer, which, Theophrastus\* says, was the only one the oligarch of his day knew, “οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη ἐῖς κόλρανός ἐστω.” “The people of India,” to quote the words of Sir John Malcolm,† “have little or no idea of divided power, they imagine all authority to be vested in one man.”

But nowhere are the *effects of caste* more strongly marked, and nowhere have its harshest features yielded more manifestly to the power of civilization, than in our *Indian army*. According to the antecedent history of mankind, it would have been deemed an extravagant conceit in any one to have imagined that Christians from islands in the Atlantic, in search of traffic in Indostan, should train the natives to be soldiers, should so moderate and control their numerous prejudices, that they should find in them that devotion, ardour, and perseverance, which is usually rewarded with victory. That they should, unhesitatingly, lead them against even their own countrymen; and, though unacquainted with the British language beyond the range of terms used at drill and parade, these soldiers should be made fully to understand, and skilfully perform the most intricate evolutions of the British line, in which they take their place, and on which they have never yet brought disgrace.

We may observe, however, that it has been no new thing for a foreign power to rule India by means of an army, levied from the people themselves, and made as zealous for the interests of the conquerors as ever

\* Character of the Oligarch.      † Political History of India.

they were for their own sovereigns and their own nation. Innumerable instances might be adduced of Hindoo soldiers fighting against a prince of their own caste, under the banners of a Mussulman leader, and of Mussulman troops, on the contrary, attacking one of the faithful in the ranks of Hindoos.

The secret cause of this *disregard of country and want of patriotic feelings*, to which, more than perhaps to any other cause, we owe the acquisition and retention of our Indian empire, is to be found in the institution of caste.

When the policy of pleasing the natives was especially strong, under the administration of Lord Cornwallis, men of the lowest caste were, as we have remarked above, excluded from our army; yet even among the higher classes there was the same exclusiveness as would have existed between men of the highest and lowest castes. It was unaccompanied, however, by that discontent which would have arisen, if the latter had been admitted. Even these regulations do not at present prevail. There is now no legal bar to the admission of even a Pariah into our Indian regiments, though such would be rejected, as any promotion which might happen to be granted them would be viewed with dissatisfaction by those of superior caste, who, in general, form the majority of a regiment.\*

\* The old ideas in regard to caste are said to be still prevalent at head-quarters in the Bengal Presidency. Men are incessantly paid up, and discharged when there are doubts about the purity of their caste.

Hence we may now find among our troops Hindoos of every tribe, caste, province, and dialect;\* so that no less than thirty nations are said to supply recruits to our native force of sepoys. We find there men of every language in India, Indostanee, Dukhnee, Telinga, Tamil, and Mahratta, both worshippers of Shiva, and worshippers of Vishnoo; we may find multitudes of Mahometans, as well of the Soonee as of the Shiah sects, together with Protestants and Romanists, half castes and Topasses, and even Jews and Ghebirs, a commixture, a "*colluvies gentium*," unparalleled in military history.

What is the result? There is but one cord which binds men of such a diversity of nations, creeds, and languages together. This is their allegiance to the same master, and their expectation of pay or promotion entirely dependent on their conduct satisfying the views of their employers. This links them firmly together, just as in former times it did the disorderly hosts of the Mogul, and as the hope of plunder united the predatory bands of the Mahrattas, or the flying cavalry of the Pindarrees. As long as they are well paid they are thorough Dalgetties—they care little for whom they fight. Like the mercenary troops of the

This line of policy is more Hindoo than that of the Hindoos themselves, and probably very imprudent, as the high caste men do not always make the best regular soldiers. They are generally at the bottom of all insubordination. See Campbell's India, p. 518.

\* Historical Sketch of the Princes of India, by an officer in the service of the H. E. I. C., p. 48.

middle ages, they will be true and faithful to the power that supports them, but, unlike such condottieri, they can never render themselves formidable by mutiny or insubordination; any such tendency the existence of caste effectually counteracts. On parade, or on actual service, discipline, with its iron hand, has repressed many of their antipathies, and they live on terms of mutual forbearance. Their diversity of caste and manners in no way appears to interrupt the chain of military subordination. Yet, no sooner is parade broken up, than they divide into sectional coteries, the gradation of caste, or the difference of religion appears. The rank of military life gives way to social distinctions; the etiquette of soldiers to that of citizens. The Sudra sergeant is restored to his social rank, and makes his salaam to the Bramin or Rajpoot private. The Mussulman avoids the Christian, the Shiah the Soonee, the Hindoo all. Split into their divisions of caste, they may be seen in small parties, or even alone, cooking and eating their simple meal. The pleasures and conviviality of the table are, for the most part, unknown among them;\* and thus one great means of social fusion, and of learning the undisguised feelings of their comrades, is taken away.

The native commissioned officers, again, are rarely all of the same caste. They cannot then join in one mess; but each associates and eats with those of his own caste, be they privates or otherwise: a custom

\* Large suppers, however, are sometimes given by the natives, especially at Calcutta.

which, as tending sensibly to curtail their authority on parade, has been condemned by military men, but which has the advantage of making them acquainted with the prevailing sentiments of their corps. So that, standing, as they do, between the unapproachable English officer and his submissive soldiers, they hear of inconveniences before they become grievances, and remedies can be applied which nip sedition in the bud. So that all these minute divisions and sub-divisions, produced by caste, materially diminish the chance of any revolutionary insubordination. An impassable barrier of mutual distrust and jealousy hinders all amalgamation of opinion, and obstructs all unity of action even on those national subjects, which separately and independently interest the whole body. Mutinies have, on several occasions, arisen among our sepoys, and yet have, probably, never had their origin in caste. Of these, the most determined, was that which occurred at Vellore in 1806. Its causes were clearly traced to a thoughtless violation of native prejudices.\* Lord William Bentinck, in that eagerness for change and reform, for which he was in India so notorious, issued orders that the sepoys should clip their mustachios, should appear on parade with their chin shaved, should not wear the distinguishing marks of caste upon the forehead, or their huge ear-rings when in uniform. To this was added changes in their dress. A turban was introduced of a new cut, which

\* See MacFarlane's *India*, Vol. ii. p. 157, for a full account of the massacre of Vellore.



the natives fancied bore some resemblance to the European hat, against which they possess a deeply-grounded prejudice. To make it even more offensive, it was surmounted with a leathern cockade, which was supposed to be formed of the skin of the hog, an animal held to be impure both by the Mussulmans and Hindoos. These feelings were shared, more or less, by the whole of our native force. That open mutiny broke out at Vellore, was owing to the fact of the family of Tippoo being there resident, and having collected around them, by their charities and patronage, large numbers of the old retainers of their house. These were men who had been brought up in the disorderly scenes which marked the reigns of Hyder and Tippoo, and were involved in the ruin which befel that dynasty. They found no congenial employment under the peaceful sway of the Company, and were ready to join in any, the wildest, project that held forth a hope of plunder, or a chance of bettering their desperate fortunes. It was to the presence of these men that the massacre at Vellore was due.

The open disaffection of the sepoys there did not even reach the native cavalry stationed at Arcot, which was scarcely sixteen miles distant. Under Colonel Gillespie they joined in attacking the rebels at Vellore, and stained their sabres as deeply in the blood of their misguided countrymen as did our own Dragoons.\*

Other mutinies of our native troops, as for instance

\* See Quarterly Review, No. XXXVI.

that of the celebrated 15th Battalion,\* which behaved with remarkable gallantry against the French at Masulipatam, the mutiny which occurred at Barrackpoor in 1782, all arose either from the supposed non-performance of promises made by the Company, or from suspicion that it was the intention of Government to transport the regiments to fresh quarters by sea.†

With regard to all these cases of military insubordination there is one circumstance worthy of especial remark, viz., that no one of them ever became really formidable.‡ They were outbreaks of popular feeling, which were quelled at the first appearance of resistance. Probably none had a duration of more than one day. At Vellore a single charge sufficed to rout the insurgents. At Barrackpoor they fled at the first discharge of the artillery which was brought against them. The mutineers appear never to have possessed any unanimity of action, of power, of dangerous combination. To what other cause can this be attributed than to caste? It is this which hinders them, when not on duty, from mixing indiscriminately. It prevents them from indulging in that unrestrained conviviality, in which by unguardedly revealing their secret causes of discontent, men mutually encourage one another in insubordination. Military outbreaks in India have most assuredly had a very different

\* See Captain Williams' Account of Bengal Native Infantry, p. 14.

† Ibid. p. 204.

‡ Ibid. p. 204.

character from those in any other part of the world. We know of no better cause to which this can be attributed, than to the existence of caste among the men who compose our regiments. It is this which forms a bar to all amalgamation, and which renders successful conspiracy impossible. It is this which guarantees their obedience, and which has made it impossible for any of the political adventurers, who have arisen at the fall of Indian dynasties, to work upon their fidelity.

To such an extent indeed has this been the case, that though, since the days of Clive, we have constantly had in our employ never less than thirty or forty thousand native sepoys; though they have been commanded by Europeans, necessarily to a considerable extent young and inexperienced officers, who rarely were acquainted with the language of even a single one of the many nations of which they are composed; though they have too often wantonly insulted their feelings, and ridiculed their religious opinions; though they were for a long time excluded from all rank, but that of *havildars* and *naiks*, the very lowest of non-commissioned officers; though when commissions were given them their officers were treated by those of the line with the grossest injustice, and the most supercilious contempt; though, in short, they have often been the subjects of tyranny and of indignities, casually or designedly heaped upon them, yet mutiny or insubordination has but rarely arisen. This, too, though they have seen

the spectacle of their rulers, at least twice, on the point of civil war: once in 1777,\* when Warren Hastings quarrelled with General Clavering and the Council; and again in 1807, when differences arose at Madras between General Macdowall and the Governor, Sir George Barlow, and blood was actually shed at Seringapatam and Chitteldroog by the mutineers of Mysore.† *They* have preserved an unalterable fidelity to their standard and their “salt:” their attachment to their military honour has ever been found greater than any that they bore for their country, their kindred, their native prince, or even their religion.

A remarkable instance of this was displayed at the insurrection of Benares in 1781,‡ consequent upon Warren Hastings seizing, in a most unjustifiable manner, the Rajah, Cheyte Sing, at the time of a public festival. Although the sepoys were of the same religion and nation as the assailants; and although they must, in some degree at least, have partaken of the feelings which influenced them, yet in retaining the person of the Rajah four companies with their officers were cut to pieces to a man. But not only did a company of fifty, who were with the governor in the greatest peril, remain faithful, but others, who were dispersed in the town in cantonments, and who might easily have escaped, preferred joining their corps. With these Warren Hastings retreated to the rock of

\* See MacFarlane's India, Vol. i. p. 173.      + Ibid. Vol. ii. p. 181

‡ Ibid. Vol. i. p. 206.

Chunar. There he collected other sepoy<sup>s</sup>—for *all* the European troops were at a distance, either watching the Mahrattas, or drawing the first war with Tippoo to a close—and with sepoy<sup>s</sup>, and *sepoy<sup>s</sup> alone*, he put down one of the most critical insurrections that ever disturbed our Indian rule.

In the case of a riot which occurred at the same place about twenty years later, the fidelity of our sepoy<sup>s</sup> was still more severely tried.\* The tumult began by the Mussulmans breaking down a famous pillar, named Siva's walking-staff, held in high veneration by the Hindoos. These last, in revenge, destroyed a mosque, and the Mahometans retaliated by killing a cow, and pouring her blood into the sacred well. In consequence every Hindoo capable of bearing arms, and many who had no other fitness for the employment than rage supplied, procured weapons, and attacked their enemies with frantic fury. Being the most numerous party, they put the Mussulmans in danger of actual extermination, and would certainly have burned every mosque in the place before twenty-four hours were over, if our sepoy<sup>s</sup> had not been called in. Of these last the greater number were Hindoos, and perhaps one-half Bramins, any one of whom, if he had been his own master, would have rejoiced in an opportunity of shedding his life's blood in a quarrel with the Mussulmans. Of the mob, whom they were led to attack, the Bramins, Yogis, Gossains, and other religious mendicants, formed the front rank.

\* See Heber's Journey, Vol. i. p. 429.

With their bodies and faces covered with chalk and ashes, with their long hair untied, as devoted to death, they pointed to their *zenaar*, the sacred badge of their order, and yelled out the bitterest curses of their religion against our sepoy's if they persisted in waging an unnatural war against their brethren and their gods. These were, however, immoveable. Regarding their military oath as the most sacred of all obligations, they fired at a Bramin as readily as at a Mussulman. They kept guard at the gate of a mosque as faithfully and fearlessly as if it had been the temple of Siva himself. Their courage and steadiness preserved Benares from ruin, and quenched a disturbance which threatened to put all India in a flame.

It must not, however, be supposed that our military institutions have had no reference to their natural prejudices and antipathies. These have only been repressed so far as they have been held injurious to the discipline or the utility of the army. Our sepoy's, with a few exceptions, possess the same liberty as they would enjoy, if employed in the service of a Hindoo rajah. We have, it is true, led them across the Indus, mounted them on hogskin saddles, transported them from place to place by sea, prevented them from eating naked; and latterly, have paid no regard to caste in the selection of native officers, so that the Bramin and Rajpoot is liable to obey a Sudra or Chandala, and the haughty Nayr and Polygar of Malabar to receive a command from the despised Pariah, by each of which actions caste is irre-



trievably lost. Yet this has not been effected at once. It has arisen from years of discipline, and intimate acquaintance with our own undisguised feelings on such subjects.

If at some time or other we had not made ourselves aware of their antipathies, and as far as possible humoured their prejudices, we should never have found them so devoted to our service, or sanguine in the pursuit of our enterprises. Great, indeed, is the praise due to our Indian government, for having gradually brought the army into its present efficient state, by modifying for military purposes the institution of caste. The comparative liberality of our pay, which enables the sepoy comfortably to support his family, to which, like all Asiatics, he is very much attached, would always have rendered our service popular. Our system of rewards and pensions, for wounds and service, and above all the regularity with which they are paid—a regularity unexampled in Oriental history—would doubtless have lured men to our standard. Very many would have served us in preference to native princes, who never, before the prevalence of European habits among them, had conceived of any more certain method of paying an army, than by grants of land in the conquered provinces, or by assignments on the revenue of districts—a mode which generally led to mutinies among the troops, from the difficulty of realizing their pay.

Our\* recruits, however, would have been men of the

\* Oude and the disturbed districts of the native princes, where life

lowest rank, the refuse of society, instead of, as they now are, the most respectable Ryots, Bramins, Rajpoots, and the poorer members of the very highest castes. We should in vain have looked for that ready valour, which has not been surpassed by that of the most warlike nations; valour which on two occasions, on one of which they were opposed to French soldiers,\* urged our sepoys to advance, even after the troops of the King's service had been repulsed. We should not have found that persevering intrepidity, which contributed in no small degree to all our successes in India.† There would have been lacking that gallant bearing which did good service at the battles of Plassy, Assaye, and Meeanee, and more recently at those of Moodkee, Aliwal, and Sobraon—that bravery which did so much to retrieve our disasters, if not our disgrace in Cabul, that their conduct extorted this confession from the hero‡ of that campaign: “I was

and property are insecure, are said to furnish us with a considerable number of recruits. They are not, however, in general worthless fellows, the offscouring of society, but men of respectability in their own station of life; they enter our service for the purpose of indulging a propensity for arms, or of bettering their condition.

\* Elphinstone's *India*, p. 198.

† The intrepidity with which our sepoys endured the intense sufferings in Colonel Menon's disastrous retreat, will never be forgotten. Accustomed to live on rice, they have in cases of distress, voluntarily relinquished their share of animal food, and generously presented it to the European troops, who suffer intensely from want of it. See Captain William's *Bengal Battalion Infantry*, p. 369.

‡ MacFarlane's *India*, Vol. ii. p. 401.

obliged," says General Nott, "more than once to tell even my own officers, that I would save their honour and their lives in spite of themselves. Our sepoys always acted nobly, and I could have done anything with them, and at the very time when the press abused and calumniated these men, I could in perfect confidence have led 5,000 sepoys against 20,000 Affghans." On this but one comment is necessary, viz., that the Affghans are considered the bravest of Asiatics.\*

He must be well acquainted with India who would understand the mystery of caste ; yet without this knowledge he would in vain train sepoys to fight his battles.

It was ignorance of this, which ruined the fortunes of Count Lally, and led to the annihilation of French influence in India. Lally was profoundly ignorant of the complex nature of Indian society. He forcibly employed the different castes in labours to which they had not been accustomed, or which they deemed derogatory to their dignity. The more rigour he exercised, the greater became the difficulty of finding labourers, or of getting any work done. His sepoys were disgusted. Careless of success, they fought without spirit, and seized every opportunity for desertion. His ill treatment of Bramins, his pillage of temples, and the excesses of his followers in their march upon

\* Nevertheless, when a regiment has been overworked, the sepoys have sat down, and the European officers have not been able to rouse them to attack the enemy.

Tanjore, surpassed even the worst atrocities of the Pindarrees and Senassie Fakirs. A regiment of hussars was constantly employed in cattle-lifting. The natives saw their cows and oxen driven into the French camp, where no price was paid or even promised; their sacred bulls were mercilessly slaughtered; their women outraged to the last degree. At Kivalore, on the line of his march, stood a pagoda supposed to contain great riches. Here he halted, ransacked the place and the houses of the Bramins, dragged the tanks, and got possession of a multitude of idols, which to his bitter disappointment were found to be composed, not of gold, but of brass. On another occasion he seized Bramins, men revered as much for their piety as for their caste, and blew them from the mouths of his cannon; by this means incurring a horrible odium without any profit. These excesses, unpopular as they would have made him in any country, had an effect upon the feeling of the Hindoos, which no favours and no successes could ever erase; and he fell, and with him fell the French rule in India; less by its military than its political errors; less by its misfortunes in the field, than by disaffection in its own camp, arising from this very subject of caste.

Such mistakes in policy our Indian government, from its long acquaintance with the character of the natives, has carefully avoided. In military affairs it has singularly adapted itself to their prejudices. For more than a century, they have enjoyed in the camp of Europeans as much toleration as they would have

done if serving a Hindoo master, or at any rate as much as satisfies their religious scruples. Yet withal caste is diminishing: as the soldiers become more enlightened, and better acquainted with European feelings, they lose their respect for one point after another of their natural prejudices. These gradually fall into disuse. When they are in this condition, an order of the council abolishes them, and the steady spirit of strict discipline effectually prevents their revival.

Again, many of our sepoys are the descendants of men who have served us. They have been born in our camps, brought up in a daily regard for our institutions, and have known no other master than the Company. On entering the ranks they have no preconceived antipathies to conquer. They have learned to regard their caste no further than the regulations of the camp allow. They learn to pay little respect to its rules, and to be indifferent spectators of the most glaring offences against its spirit. To conclude with the words of the great Duke of Wellington, "I know well the feeling of the Indian army; I know its subordination and discipline to be such, that there is no feeling of distinction as concerns religion or caste, any more than among British troops."\*

Another important guarantee for the fidelity of our sepoys, which arises from caste, should not be omitted. The Cshatrya or military class, as we have before ob-

\* Speech in defence of Lord Ellenborough, upon the restoration of the Gates of Somnaut.



served, were in theory, whatever might be the actual practice, considered to hold the profession of arms exclusively by inheritance, and to rank next to the Bramins; whilst the inferior classes were enjoined to treat them with profound respect. Hence by permitting men of the lower ranks to be enrolled in our army, we have very sensibly elevated their character, and have given them a higher social rank; a rank which they hold by serving us, and by that alone. In return it becomes their policy, no less than their duty, to be faithful to our rule, as its subversion would in every respect injure their social, as well as pecuniary circumstances. Whilst at the same time the proud hereditary soldiery, who had hitherto looked upon such men as beings of a lower grade in creation, have been driven by the inflexible power of discipline to assume different habits of thinking, and to look upon the Sudra, if not as an equal, at any rate not as an inferior. From these circumstances, the influence of caste is greatly diminishing among our Hindoo soldiery. The day is, perhaps, not so far distant as some may imagine, when it will for all practical purposes cease; when Bramins and Sudras, Rajpoots and Jats, Goojurs, Bunneas, Kaits, Paiks, Mahometans, and Parsees, Jains and Christians, men of every caste, tribe, and nation, will join together in one mess, and associate with as much, or possibly more freedom, than Europeans of the same number of different nations, sects, and religions.\*

\* See Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 431.



With caste, as with other customs peculiar to India, it has been the policy of the East India Company to interfere as little as possible. They are subjects which, they soon discovered, were to be handled with the greatest delicacy. The introduction of laws, unless they carry with them the feelings of the people, are in all cases of little avail ; but in regard to directing the sentiments or opinions of masses of men, have absolutely an effect opposite to that intended. Of the Hindoo notions on religious subjects, of which caste forms one, this has long since been observed as especially true. Dubois describes them as a people who will submit to extortion, to having their wives and children sold as slaves, in fine to every species of civil oppression, but that once interfere with their religion, and they are an ungovernable nation, whose fierce passions are uncontrollable. If we consider the scenes of strife and bloodshed, which have arisen at different times and places, but especially at Benares, as described in a preceding section, and at the great fairs of Hurdwar, from religious insult and intolerance, it is apprehended that every person conversant with the Indian character, will assent to the truth of what Dubois has remarked.

Consistent with this idea has been the policy of our Government. Well aware that for many years (even if the same may not now be true) our empire was not founded upon the good-will of the people, or our own popular acts, but was an "*empire of opinion*," as it has been termed, that is, one founded upon a prevailing

idea among our subjects, that we are morally and physically their superiors, and that no power which they could exert against us will ever effect our removal. Well aware of this, the East India Company have made it a fundamental point in their policy, never to afford the people an opportunity of learning their strength by a sudden outbreak of popular fury. Hence the Directors have been especially careful that the prejudices of the natives should be respected. They have given encouragement to their feasts, have never confiscated either the devutter, pirutter or bramutter : that is, the property respectively attached to Hindoo temples, Mahometan mosques, and Bramins. Hence it was that at one time they supported their religious ceremonies, even the foul rites of Juggernaut himself, and respected local customs. For a long time they allowed Suttees and human sacrifices even at Sagor,\* within sight as it were of Calcutta itself. Aware, too, how much caste kept the people from uniting in any general enterprise, they long countenanced its pretensions, and in doing so have even neglected the claims of religious toleration, and done injustice to men of their own religion and of their own country.

\* Sagor Island is a celebrated place of pilgrimage among the Hindoos, on account of the great sanctity arising from its situation at the junction of the holiest branch of the Ganges, with the Ocean. Many human sacrifices were, in consequence, there performed, of aged persons of both sexes, which were voluntary, and of children, which were forced. MacFarlane's India, Vol. ii. p. 150.

For many years there existed regulations, "that no person should be authorized to officiate as a vakeel, or as a district moonsif, without the previous sanction of the provincial court, *nor unless he be of the Hindoo or Mahometan persuasion.*"\* "Will it be believed," says Heber, "that whilst the Rajah of Tanjore kept his dominions, Christians were eligible to all the different offices of state, whilst now, there is an order of Government against their being admitted to any employment."†

In cases like this, that caution which is of vital importance to the preservation of our Indian power, was doubtless carried to excess. Its exercise may in some instances have been attended with great hardship, and apparent injustice. Individual merit may have been sacrificed to the exigencies of state policy. These, however, will occur more or less under every form of government. Private advantage must ever succumb to the public good.

Our Indian rulers observed that, for seven centuries, Mahometans of Persia and Tartary kept the Hindoos in subjection; that during that period, though Hindoo chiefs, and Mahometan Omrahs and Atabegs of wealth and influence, could, by holding out a prospect of plunder to their followers, without much difficulty excite a rebellion, it was interference with their reli-

\* See Reg. 27, of 1814, for the office of vakeel or lawyer, and Reg. 23, of 1814, for that of moonsif or judge of a minor court. These were repealed in 1831.

† See Heber's Journey, Vol. iii. p. 463.

gion alone, which roused the feelings of the natives as a body ; that, enjoying a free exercise of this, they were a people who submitted without resistance to any conqueror. On these considerations their policy of non-interference with native customs was founded, and so justly founded, that no insurrection of importance has yet disturbed our Indian rule. This absence of rebellion is a most remarkable feature in the history of our internal government of India. From our first acquisition of territory to the present day, there has been nowhere any general rising or struggle for independence. Before our system was well known, there may have been occasional resistance to the payment of revenue, in the hope of obtaining better terms, after the practice which had long been common under the native governments, when the mode of seeking an abatement of rent was by pointing guns at the collector, but such outbreaks the mere exhibition of force has generally at once quelled.\* In fact, offences such as treason and sedition are so uncommon, as scarcely to form the subject of legislation. Probably, during the whole course of our Indian history, there has never been a civil execution for a political crime.

We have left changes in habits and customs to the sure power of civilization and education. Our presence in the country has set a spirit of inquiry abroad, which has ended in indifference for many ceremonies, which formed leading features in the habits of the Hindoos. The Company may, perhaps,

\* See Campbell's India, pp. 200 and 472.

have occasionally acted with undue timidity, when they refused the Christian that impartial favour and protection which were extended to the Moolah and the Bramin.\* Most of such distinctions, however, have for some years been abolished. When even the natives began to perceive the cruelty and absurdity of suttees, when they were not even popular among the better part of the people,† Government forbade them first at Sagor, and then throughout the whole of its dominions. The same may be observed of infanticide, and many other customs which have disgraced Indostan. Similar considerations regulate its policy with regard to caste. When the undermining influence of reason shall have sapped its foundations, then, like other customs opposed to the welfare of society, its restrictions, as far as they are still in any way directly or indirectly encouraged by our laws,

\* Against this may be laid the fact, that it is with money collected from the natives that Christian churches have been built and bishoprics endowed.

† In the code of Menu, and in the oldest Shasters, there is not even an allusion to suttees. The duties of a widow are frequently described with great particularity, and in a manner totally opposed to self-immolation. Ram Mohun Roy translated many passages bearing on this subject into Hindostanee, and in a cleverly-written tract labours to prove to his fellow-countrymen that suttees were contrary to the spirit of their religion, and were too often encouraged for the purpose of obtaining the property of the widow. He was supposed at the time to express the sentiments of the more enlightened of his countrymen. Suttees, to the surprise of most persons, were abolished without the slightest disturbance. For account of them see Elphinstone's India, p. 189.

will be peaceably and decisively removed. The progress of civilization and of religion will be better and more rapidly advanced by such cautious, Fabian policy, than by any premature forcing which visionary theorists would apply.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE EFFECTS OF CASTE ON THE SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC INSTITUTIONS OF INDIA.

CASTE is essentially a social and domestic institution. It may, by an indirect influence, affect the character and spirit of a country's policy, legislation, religion, or enterprise; but it is in the intercourse of ordinary life, in the laws of society, in the regulations of the domestic circle, that its direct influence is to be discovered. Thither, then, we will turn our attention, and notice, *First—Its influence on the natives of India themselves. Secondly—Its effects on the intercourse which exists between them and the comparatively small number of Europeans who rule them.*

First.—Its influence on the natives themselves.

One of the most important features of caste, among whatever people it has prevailed, is its *tendency to bring the nation to a certain, and that, too, a moderately high, pitch of civilization, and after that to cramp every attempt at further advance.* The cause of this may probably be seen by the following considerations :—

Among savages, each individual, by a small amount of reason (between which however and instinct there is a very wide gulf) provides himself with the necessities of life. With his own hand he is furnished with his simple garments; the mat which covers his shoulders, the girdle which surrounds his loins, and the mocassins which protect his feet. He fabricates, too, his own weapons, the instruments of the chase or of war, and when he dies leaves to his children the task of in turn forming the same implements with little or no assistance from *his* experience. So matters go on from age to age, and the advance made in arts or cultivation is but small. If it happen, however, that a barbarous tribe adopt the principle of the division of labour, and assign to each of its members and their descendants the duty of making particular instruments, or performing particular services; so that one family provide the tribe with leaders, another with priests, another with judges or poets; whilst others are farmers or artizans, furnishing their tribe with articles of clothing, or the implements of peace or of war; if this were to happen, the result would be that each man, paying attention to his own particular art, would advance to proficiency; he would have others destined to the same life as his assistants. These would make equal or greater progress. Thus at his death his labours and experience would not perish. Generation after generation would take up the same art, and carry it forward until it arrived at considerable perfection. "Affert," says

Tully,\* “*vetustas omnibus in rebus longinquâ observatione incredibilem scientiam ;*” or, in the words of Manilius—

“*Per varios usus artem experientia fecit,  
Exemplo monstrante viam.*”

This perfection, however, would in general be merely *manual*. As no man, whatever his abilities or riches, could raise himself above his class, all inducement for invention or intellectual improvement would be taken away ; and when manual dexterity had arrived at its limit—a limit which is soon attained—an end would be put to all further advance in any particular art. Civilization would become in that respect stationary. Among nations in which caste has no existence, or at least merely divides society into its respective grades, every encouragement is given to invention and improvement. By the benefits resulting from these things men are taught to look for advancement and distinction. Hence they are eager after improvements in art and science. Progression becomes the necessary condition of existence : whoever retrogrades is ruined :—

“*Non aliter quam qui adverso vix flumine lembum  
Remigiis subigit, si brachia forte remisit,  
Atque illum in præceps pronò rapit alveus amni.*” +

Machinery takes the place of manual labour ; and as the intellectual faculties appear to admit of no bounds in improvement, but to be capable of con-

\* De Div. i. § 49.

+ Georg. i. 201.

tinually increased cultivation, so discoveries, which are the results of mental consideration, similarly appear to possess no limit, and there would seem in consequence to be no boundaries to civilization.

In unison with these laws have been the observed results, in whatever countries caste has been paramount. The Egyptians, according to Herodotus,\* were in this particular like the Hindoos. The whole nation was arranged in seven grand classes, and these again had their different departments of trades and professions, in which children invariably succeeded their parents. The same, too, appears to have been the case in Etruria and in Lydia, from which the Etrurians are said to have migrated. Its effects were such as we have described. These nations early arrived at comparatively high civilization. Their artificers quickly surpassed those of the neighbouring nations in all the productions of manual toil, and in such things have left monuments which still command our admiration. The vases of Etruria, the mural sculptures of Lydia,† and the decorative designs of Egypt, are even still imitated.

Like India, however, they arrived at a certain point of civilization, and then became stationary. Caste, to whose fostering care they were at first so much indebted, thenceforward arrested their progress, and they were quickly outstripped by other nations in the race of improvement.

Similar, too, have been the effects of caste wherever

\* Lib. ii. cap. 164.

† *e. g.* The Phigalian marbles.

else, and under whatever form, it has exhibited itself; whether as a guild in trade,\* a monopoly in business, or exclusiveness in society, in religion, in politics, or in philosophy.† Up to a certain point its influence fosters and benefits, beyond that it cramps and injures.

Such have pre-eminently been its effects on the Hindoos. When we first meet with them in the page of history,‡ we find them for the most part as polished and as civilized as at present. Unlike the early legends of other nations, their stories tell of no age of barbarism in which they were untutored savages. Their earliest records, which, as might be expected, are poetic,§ represent them, even then, as possessing much about the same refinement as they did when moderns were first made acquainted with

\* The advantages which have accrued to the trade and manufacturing interests of England from the abolition of the exclusive privileges of different guilds will readily occur to the reader. Yet it was the influence which these guilds exerted, and the power which they possessed of marking upon goods their real value, regulating the market, controlling the supply, &c., which in the middle ages laid the foundation of English commerce.

† Throughout the fifteenth century it was the assiduous study of Aristotle which advanced and preserved the existence of learning. One hundred and fifty years later it was the blind following of the Stagyrite, which more than anything else retarded the progress of science, until Cardan, and above all, Bacon, introduced new methods of philosophical investigation.

‡ The accounts of their civilization, their refined manners, singular customs, &c., as given by Arrian, Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, and other Greek writers, are in very many particulars accurately descriptive of their present condition.

§ *e. g.* Baghvat Geeta.

them by the travels of De Barros, Hawkins, or Raynal. If, as Minerva sprang fully equipped from the head of Jove, they appear to issue from the obscurity of time, a full-grown polished nation, it is, that under the fostering influence of caste they early attained to considerable refinement.

Caste, as we have said before, is partially a religious institution. Though it may not at present be so much religion, as a slavish superstition, which upholds its extraordinary privileges, and reconciles and cements, so as to preserve from disorganization, a community in which certain interests are kept in immutable subordination, yet superstition, upon which it is founded, is but a species of religious feeling.

In this sense the very structure of Indian society is formed by a religious system, which to a certain degree interferes with every temporal as well as spiritual concern of its members. To this the mind of the Hindoo, naturally feeble and submissive, has for so long a period paid unhesitating respect, that it has, as it were, lost the powers of doubting, hesitating, and examining. Its noblest faculties are impaired or destroyed. Hope and fear, the two grand stimulants to human exertion, are taken away. Improvement and progress have in consequence also vanished. The religious obligations of caste may, perhaps, preserve internal peace; but whilst they thus assist the first steps towards civilization, they so debase the mind, and lull it in so languid a repose, that all further approaches are entirely precluded.



Another important point to be remarked, is the *character* which caste has always given to the *villages or townships* of India, and to the Ryots, or Sudras, who inhabit them, and whose employment is agriculture.

The backwoodsman of America will collect his furniture and cattle, and with his solitary family will fearlessly penetrate for hundreds of miles into the forest, until he finds a soil and situation congenial to his taste. His rifle, or some yet more deadly weapon, and, above all, the stout heart within him, awe the savage or command his respect. Few are the beasts of prey which infest the wilds of the far west. The grisly bear is a harmless monster; unless attacked, he shuns the presence of man. The lion, the tiger, the leopard, the panther, and the hyæna—the scourges of the east—are unknown. Their representative, the jaguar, is rarely found to the north of the Isthmus, and is but a sneaking plunderer, to whom the hen-roost or the sheep-pen furnish an ignoble banquet.

In India matters stand not thus. The dense jungle teems with monsters of courage and ferocity. The Hindoo possesses arms of the most ineffective description, and is constitutionally a coward: hence he never ventured singly to locate himself in the jungle, and reclaim land from the wilderness, like the enterprising Kentuckian; but he migrated in communities. Such was, doubtless, the origin of the compact villages of Indostan, which are not to be referred, as some would hold, to the laws of Menu, or the arbitrary enactments

of some conqueror, who so divided the country for convenience in collecting his revenue.

When the village was founded, then came into active operation the institution of caste—an institution which Hindoos have always considered essential to the well-being of society; just as Englishmen imagine that no government can possibly be good whose principles are not those of Magna Charta, which does not possess its Habeas Corpus Act, and the prudence of whose legislation is not guaranteed by a threefold\* revision of two Houses of Assembly, and a supreme head. To each member in a Hindoo village was appointed particular duties which were exclusively his, and which were in general transmitted to his descendants. The whole community became one great family, which lived together, and prospered on their public lands, whilst the private advantage of each particular member was scarcely determinable. It became then the fairest, as well as the least troublesome, method of collecting the revenue to assess the whole village at a certain sum, agreed upon by the Tehsildar and headman. This was† exacted from the latter, who, seated on the Chubootra, in conjunction with the chief men of the village, managed its affairs, and decided upon the quota of each individual member. By this means the exclusive character of each village was further increased, until they have

\* In the United States, and in most of our colonies, the government has this threefold character.

† Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 144.

become, throughout nearly the whole of the Indian peninsula, little republics, supplied, owing to the regulations of caste, with artizans of nearly every craft, and almost independent of any foreign relations. Their boundaries are accurately defined, and, owing to the strong tide of popular feelings which exists, are so jealously guarded that they have waged the fiercest wars for the possession of a few acres of border land.

The inhabitants all dwell within the limits of their village, which, until recently, were usually protected by a little castle or citadel, to defend them from straggling bands of Mahrattas, Pindarees or Senassie Fakeers, or protect their valuables from neighbouring gangs of decoits.

Each\* township manages its internal affairs; taxes itself to provide funds for its internal expenses, as well as the revenue due to the State; decides disputes in the first instance, and punishes minor offences. For this purpose it possesses requisite officers, and though under a settled government it is entirely subject to the head of the State, yet in many respects it is an organized commonwealth, complete within itself, and its privileges, though often violated by Government, are never denied. They afford protection against tyranny, and in time of anarchy preserve order within their limits.

In each village the artizans work for all, each in his own trade or profession. One keeps the village re-

\* See Elphinstone, p. 65., and Appendix V. Notes on the Revenue System, p. 248. See also Campbell's India, p. 83, et seq.

cords, the accounts of the community, and even of individuals; draws up all deeds and writings, even to managing private correspondence. Another is guardian of the public boundaries, constable or watchman, head of the police, and public guide or messenger; makes himself acquainted with the character of every individual, and is bound to find out the possessor of stolen property within the township, or trace him across the boundary. Another is the money-changer, jeweller, and silversmith; another the physician; another the priest and astrologer, who is generally also the schoolmaster; and another the musician and minstrel. Then, again, there is the carpenter, the smith, the potter, the worker in leather, the barber, the tailor, and the washerman.

The duties of each one of these offices, in a large village, may appear beyond the powers of one man, but the remuneration derived from fees or public land is, by the strange operation of caste, hereditary in a particular family, all members of which assist in performing the required service—this, too, with such readiness and impartiality, that it is a common† remark with the collectors of the East India Company, that they never receive or hear of complaints being made against these artizans for neglect or non-performance of their respective duties, or that they served one Ryot before his turn, or oftener than another.

To such a state of things, as is the case with all local governments, the people are much attached.

\* See Policy of the Government of British India, a pamphlet, p. 75.

These village communities seem to last where nothing else lasts.

“Dynasty after dynasty,” says Sir C. T. Metcalfe,\* “tumbles down; revolution succeeds to revolution; Hindoo, Patan, Mogul, Mahratta, Sikh, English, are all masters in turn; but the village community remains the same. In times of trouble they arm and fortify themselves: a hostile army passes through the country; the village communities collect their cattle within their walls, and let the enemy pass unprovoked. If plunder and devastation be directed against themselves, and the force employed be irresistible, they flee to friendly villages at a distance; but, when the storm has passed over, they return and resume their occupations. If a country remain for a series of years the scene of continued pillage and massacre, so that the village cannot be inhabited, the scattered villagers nevertheless return, whenever the power of peaceable possession revives. A generation may pass away, but the succeeding generation will return. The sons will take the places of their fathers; the same site for the village, the same positions for the houses, the same lands will be re-occupied by the descendants of those who were driven out when the village was depopulated; and it is not a trifling matter that will drive them out, for they will often maintain their post through times of disturbance and convulsion, and acquire strength sufficient to resist pillage and oppression with success. This union of the village

\* Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, 1832.

communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself, has, I conceive, contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the people of India through all the revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence.”

Such is the testimony of Sir C. T. Metcalfe to the effects of the village communities of India, which owe, if not their origin, at any rate their long existence, to the feelings and ideas of exclusiveness, which arise from caste. What else could bind down men, who are neither public nor private slaves, to labour thus willingly for the public good? What else could induce the Ryots to pursue agriculture with that eagerness for which they are so remarkable; that, careless of the arbitrary exactions of government and banditti, to which they have been constantly exposed, they, under even the harshest tyranny, have never ceased to cultivate? Uninterested in the quarrels of their rulers, they have actually been observed pursuing their ordinary\* avocations whilst a battle was being fought in a neighbouring field.

The stability and the sterling power of a country is in general dependent on the prosperity of its agriculture. Trade may, as in our own favoured land, raise a nation to political importance and grandeur, but where this is wanting, durability of power is only guaranteed to a people by the enterprise of their agriculturalists.

\* See Policy of Government of British India, p. 21, et seq.



The industry of a vigorous yeomanry, to a proverb, constitutes the strength of every state. In India this industry is in great measure due to caste, which may thus be considered to have materially contributed to the civilization of that country.

Not only has caste advanced India to civilization, but, by its effects on its municipalities and on society, has often prevented it from again relapsing into barbarism. Consider what must otherwise have been the results of the numerous awful visitations which it has endured: invasions, such as those of Mahomet of Ghizni, of Zenghis, of Tamerlane, or of Nadir Shah—those Attilas and Alarics of the East. It was caste which kept society together during that long period of revolutions which attended the fall of the house of Delhi, and which, lastly, now contributes to render the country capable of furnishing an annual revenue of forty-eight millions sterling†—a revenue, it may be remarked, which is more than double the income of the whole of the Russias.

In addition to its having preserved in the village constituencies great personal liberty, under all the changes of government to which Indostan has been subject, it forms in another way a great defence against the abuses which despotic princes are ever ready to commit. Sometimes one may see in a native state, through a whole district, the traders shutting up their shops, the farmers abandoning the fields,

\* See Campbell's India, p. 409. Only about twenty millions sterling actually passes through our own hands.

and the different workmen or artificers quitting their booths, by an order from the caste, for the purpose of avenging some insult or injury suffered from a governor or other person in office. The labours of society come to a stand-still, and the greatest inconveniences ensue, until the injustice is atoned for, or what is more generally the case, the offended caste has come to an accommodation with the persons in power. In this way the power of caste has often, with the happiest effect, stood between the oppressor and the oppressed.

*Englishmen in India have but little opportunity of making themselves acquainted with the domestic character of the natives.* In addition to the natural bar upon intercourse which a foreign language presents, too many of our Government officers unfortunately fancy that to be on familiar terms with a native, or even to treat him with civility, is derogatory to their dignity. This no doubt is a fault of youth,\* and to be attributed to the early age at which they are made magistrates, and perhaps also their English character and education, which renders them averse to intercourse with inferiors. Even in Europe few people are well acquainted with the opinions of those beyond their own class, and what they do know is learned chiefly by means which do not exist in India. In that country, besides colour, religion, and manners, caste interferes with all familiar intercourse between us and the natives. We know little of the interior of families but by report. We have

\* See Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 106, &c., for some valuable remarks on this subject.

little share in those numerous occurrences of life, in which the amiable parts of character are most exhibited. There is little or no visiting between the two nations on terms of equality. Except an occasional attendance at a natch or family festival,\* an Englishman has rarely any better opportunity of learning the Hindoo character than in the courts of justice or revenue. It is not there that the most virtuous portion of a nation are ordinarily found. Hence Europeans have been apt to dwell more upon the vices of the Hindoo, which are patent to all, than upon his domestic virtues, which they have but rare opportunities of observing. Valuable domestic virtues, however, he possesses, and some of these, as they are intimately connected with the principles of caste, we will mention.

\* How much attendance at a natch is a mere ceremony, how little is really learned then of the true character, and how wanting the visit usually is in that mutual cordiality, &c., which belongs to those between persons of the same nation, may be seen in an account of a natch which is given by Mrs. Heber, the editress of her husband's journey. She sums up her account by remarking, that "the whole exhibition was fatiguing and stupid, nearly every charm but that of novelty being wanting. I returned home between twelve and one, much tired, and not the least disposed to attend another natch." Yet this was one given by Baboo Rouplall Mullich, one of the wealthiest natives of Calcutta. Hindoo natches are generally idolatrous feasts, often accompanied with a great deal that is gross and immoral. Shorn of its religious appendages it becomes but a tame ceremony, and as such is presented to Europeans. In the case of very many English, these form their only opportunities of penetrating the domestic circle of the Hindoo.

First must be noticed *his affection to his family and to those of his own circle.*

Ward, in his character of the Hindoos, describes them rather as they were to be found at Serampore, in Bengal, than as giving a general character of the nation. The Bengalees are the most debased of all Hindoos. Hence his character of the whole nation is considered by men better acquainted with the country as glaringly unjust. He represents them as possessing the least possible sense of filial duty and gratitude, as abusing their parents, and even beating their mothers. To this is to be opposed the fact that our sepoys, who are from every part of India, and who may on that account well be supposed to represent the general character of the inhabitants of the whole peninsula—though military pursuits have certainly a tendency to smother domestic feelings — are noted for their affection for their families and filial duty.\* Nothing is more common than for soldiers regularly to transmit to their friends a part of their pay, and the same holds true of servants, more especially of those who come from Orissa.

The strict separation of one set of individuals from others, has the effect of increasing their kindness and good feeling to one another. This it is, perhaps more than anything else, which softens the harsher feelings in the character of the Hindoo. However unfeeling

\* See Shore's India, vol. ii. p. 346; Captain Williams' description of the Bengal Native Infantry, p. 345; and Warren Hastings' despatch relative to Cheyte Sing.

his conduct towards other men, to his own family and caste he is kind and obliging. No greater instance of this can be adduced, than the loose manner in which the rights of property are regarded by members of the same family, and which, by its long prevalence in some parts of India, has rendered it impossible even to determine the rightful ownership of the land.

In theory, the principle in landed property among the Hindoos is equal division among the sons, with an allowance to the eldest for superintending the general management of the estate :\* in practice, however, the most extraordinary confusion prevails, and estates have become all but a community of property. At the death of a landed proprietor it may, as it often does, happen that the eldest son may be indolent, stupid, or unable to conduct the family business, whilst one of the younger sons may be clever and energetic. He will then, by common consent, take the place of headman, and in general without opposition from even his elder brother. Again, if the head of the family die without sons, his son-in-law, or some favourite relative, will succeed him to the prejudice of his next of kin ; or, if he have a young family, his brother or nephews will support them, and perform duties which would devolve upon them, which duties, however, on coming of age his family will often find difficulty in recovering ; as their co-sharers in the estate will naturally prefer its affairs, the agreement with the tehsildar or collector concerning the taxes, and all

\* Shore's India, vol.ii. p. 189.

money matters, to be conducted by a man of experience and of known talent, rather than by one young and unacquainted with the world.

Again a small piece of land may belong to one with a large family, whilst his neighbour, perhaps some distant relative, may have a considerable portion, and no family, or a very small one. The former, if he have interest with the heads of the village, will get them to call a *punchayet*,\* and give over to him a portion of the land which belonged to, or was in possession of, the other. By these, and many similar proceedings, the titles to land are in many provinces in the most uncertain state; and have occasioned our Government more trouble than any other civil legislation. The celebrated Ryotwar settlement, by which it has been attempted to regulate them, has often failed in its object, and been the unintentional cause of much injustice.

It is extremely common for a family composed of father, sons, sons-in-law, uncles, nephews, and perhaps other branches, to live together and virtually to enjoy their property in common, the most active among them being chosen as the manager. "All money required for the use of the family collectively, for the marriage of an individual, for carrying on their cultivation or trade, or for any other purpose, is borrowed by the head, in his own name, and he signs the bond. On the other hand, all sales of produce or merchandize

\* A sitting of the punch or council of the principal persons of the village.



are conducted by the manager. Indeed, so far is it often carried, that should one or more individuals of the family be in service, which enables them to save money, they transmit the amount, not to their own nearest relatives, but to the manager of the whole.”\*

Where could such customs as these exist, except in a country where social equality was practically carried to its highest pitch; where something more than mere relationship united the different members of a family?

In the Highlands of Scotland,† and in some parts of Ireland, similar customs once existed. There it was the pride and the predominating influence of clanship which swallowed up private aggrandizement in public advantage. In India it is the idea of caste; not perhaps caste itself so much as the exclusiveness and feelings of close connection with one set of men, and eternal separation from others, which have their origin in that institution.‡ Where the poorest feels himself, on one point at least, on a par with the richest of his own caste, and where the rich and poor join at the same simple meal. A feeling which can level to such an extent as caste really does, the great

\* Shore's India, vol. ii. p. 210.

† In Sir Walter Scott's works there will readily occur to the reader many instances of the devotion of each member of a clan to the interests of the whole, and of a confidence in their chief, which nothing could stagger.

‡ Hence, perhaps, arises the extensive use of the word "*Baee*," or brother. In India even servants are thus addressed. Our "*Boy*" is supposed to be the same word as *Baee*.

distinction of riches, and which, in theory, aims at still greater effects, has made a nearer approach to community of goods than any other system has yet done.

The identification of a man's feelings with those of a select society to which he belongs, runs through the actions of the Hindoo, not merely in relation to caste, but also in other situations, and directly or indirectly presents an insurmountable opposition to enlightened regulations. For instance, the feeling of caste-ties will well account for much of the imputed perjury of Hindoo witnesses. There is said to prevail among them the singular notion that, when summoned as witnesses by a particular person and to a particular fact, it is their duty to swear to anything and everything which may tell in his favour, and to divulge nothing which may be turned against him. Hence our courts of justice have become the scenes of perjury and deceit, practised in even the simplest cases. It is not the duty of a judge to reject the whole of the evidence of a witness, because a part of it is manifest perjury. He must, if it be possible to become acquainted with them, take cognizance of facts; where these fail, he must balance probabilities. In India, however, the true particulars of a case can so rarely be learned, that justice has, as it were, been reduced to guess-work; to a balancing, not of facts, but of probabilities alone. Our presiding magistrates are neither corrupt, nor wanting in the discharge of their duties, but the state of

affairs is such that, in very many cases, unimpeachable grounds for a decision cannot be found.\*

Justice, as sculptors have figured her, is in truth blind, but it is the blindness, not of impartiality, but of ignorance and bewilderment. How fatal to the due administration of the laws this habit of the natives proves, we may observe from the following words of a judge of circuit:—†

“Every day’s experience and reflection on the nature of our courts, and the minds and manners of the natives, serve to increase my doubts about our capacity to discover truth among them. It appears to me, that there is a very great deal of perjury of many different shades in our judicial proceedings; and that many common rules of evidence would here be inapplicable and absurd. Even the honest men, as well as the rogues, are perjured. The most simple and the most cunning alike make assertions that are incredible or that are certainly false. I am afraid that the evidence of witnesses in our courts is, for the most part, an instrument in the hands of men, and not an independent, untouched source of truth.”

The character of the Hindoo is naturally patient, supple, and insinuating above all other Asiatics. His long subjection to foreign conquerors, his constitutional timidity, his love of repose, and his limited

\* See Campbell’s *India*, p. 484, for remarks on the prevalence of perjury in our Indian courts.

† See Shore’s *India*, vol. ii. p. 175.

powers of resistance, have at all times made him more anxious to smother his feelings and avert force by fraud, and intimidation by subserviency, than risk the inconvenience which might arise from open and direct opposition.

This character is materially encouraged by caste. Its regulations concerning the respect due from individuals of one class to those of another, which enter into the whole system of life, have a tendency to put down the insolence of inferiors, and the haughtiness of superiors, and thus encourage that submissive politeness for which they are so celebrated. To a similar cause, too, we may refer a good deal of that Oriental bombast with which superiors are addressed, which, even after every allowance has been made for the different degrees of force which nations give to the language of civility, is still but gross flattery.

We next proceed to notice some of the *social and domestic anomalies which arise from* the ideas of exclusiveness instilled into the minds of Hindoos by *caste*. First of all stand those numerous *coalitions* for the *commission of crime*, for which India has long been celebrated: her *Decoit gungs*, her *Thugs*, her horrible armies of *Pindarrees* and *Sennassie Fakirs*.

Each village in India is distinct from its neighbour. The existence of the same religion, and the fact of being under the same government, preserve social feelings among them; in other respects, they have little kindred feeling; hence they make no scruple of mutually plundering one another. On a favourable

night, the more enterprising scoundrels of one village will band together, and, perhaps, put themselves under the direction of one of the caste of thieves\* (for such a caste exists); men who, like our own gipsies, are brought up to consider robbing their hereditary occupation, and are notorious for their professional dexterity. Such men will enter a neighbouring village, and before an alarm is given, will plunder several houses, and then make off to their own home. Their detection is generally impossible, for though known among their own village, they rarely betray one another, or are betrayed by others. Each man is careless of general or public advantage; his feelings are exclusive. Such outrages affect not himself, or the small circle to which caste confines all his ideas. What business, then, has he to interfere with deeds which he looks upon as the authorized and legitimate occupation of others? Hence, decoitee, when successful, is regarded more in the light in which a border foray was anciently held in Cumberland and Northumberland, than as a mean crime. Such notions as these it was which, some twenty years back, rendered decoitee so common in India, that many parts of the country were depopulated; and in Bengal, especially, it materially interfered with our annual revenue.

\* See Elphinstone's India, p. 191. It may be remarked that the long descent of the thievish castes, gains them no sympathy from the rest of the community. It is not on this account that they are tolerated.

Another of the social scourges of India are the *Thugs*. They constitute a large class, who continually travel about the country, assuming different disguises, an art in which they are great adepts. Their practice is, to insinuate themselves into the society of a traveller whom they hear to be possessed of property. Such a one they accompany, until they have an opportunity of throwing a noose round his neck, or administering a stupifying drug. He is then murdered without blood being shed, and so skilfully buried, that a long time usually elapses before his fate is suspected. These proceedings are considered to be particularly pleasing to a deity under whose tutelage the whole caste is supposed to live. Like the banditti and pirates of the middle ages, who made supplications for success, and vowed a portion of the spoil to the Madonna, they pray, and present votive offerings to the goddess Bhawani.

There is nothing, one would think, against which society would more unanimously rise, than against a system like this : yet in India it has existed from the most remote times. Occasionally the whole family of a Thug, even his youngest children, have been imprisoned, and, perhaps, kept in confinement for life ; but in native states no very decided steps for its suppression have ever been taken. Soon after the destruction of the kingdom of Mysore, however, it reached its climax ; and became so intolerable a nuisance as to attract the especial attention of the English government. Of late it has probably ceased,



having been vigorously hunted down by a branch of our Indian police, armed for this purpose with extraordinary powers.\* Its existence, like that of *decoitee*, was guaranteed by the want of mutual sympathy among the natives, and by the many similar feelings of the human mind, which are fostered by caste.

The same holds true of those more wholesale marauders the *Pindarrees*.† These were not a distinctive race, united by nationality or religion, but were men of all countries, creeds, and castes, associated and gradually assimilated by one common pursuit, that of plunder. They were all horsemen, and all robbers. In some respects, they were like the Tartars. These, however, when they came to a rich and fertile country, would settle and become herdsmen or shepherds. Not so the Pindarrees. Like swarms of locusts, acting from instinct, they laid waste the provinces which they visited. After committing the most horrible atrocities, they destroyed whatever they were unable to carry away. Their policy was to plunder and fly. If retreat was possible, they never fought. What is most singular, it was the very miseries which they created which supplied their ranks. Those who had been ruined by their depredations, joined the stream which they could not withstand, and endeavoured to redeem their own losses by inflicting the same upon their neighbours. Unrestrained by any feelings of

\* For a description of these see Campbell's India, p. 462.

† For description of them see MacFarlane's India, vol. ii. p. 206. Sir John Malcolm's Memoir of Central India, &c.

patriotism or honour, they would assist in the plunder of villages, even in their own particular districts. As long as they did not break the conventional rules which kept them members of one little bigoted circle, they cared not if they were universal outlaws.

Of all fanatics, however, who have ever commanded respect, toleration, or fear, the *Sennassie Fakirs*\* bear the palm. They are an assemblage of men, who unite the several characters of saints, jugglers, robbers, and cut-throats, which, according to Indian notions and superstitions, are not irreconcilable. They wander throughout the country in a state verging upon nudity, pretending to live by alms, but in reality, stealing, plundering, murdering, and committing every act of obscenity and violence. In the reign of the Emperor Aurangzib (1676), under the name of Satnamis, they collected in great numbers to avenge the death of one of their members. Headed by an old woman, who pretended to powers of enchantment, defended also by their religious character, and a belief that they were possessed of magical powers, they were for some time invincible. At the height of his power they made that emperor tremble on his throne, and threatened Delhi itself. The remembrance of the devastation and crimes, which they then committed, was only effaced by fresh atrocities, which they perpetrated about a century afterwards, when Warren Hastings was Governor-General. A swarm of them fell silently and rapidly upon the province of Bengal.

\* For description, see MacFarlane, vol. i. p. 150.

In bodies of 2,000 or 3,000 strong they went in search of prey. Wherever they penetrated they burned and destroyed the villages, committing every abomination. If this had occurred in any other country, no feeling either of fear or superstition, would have restrained the inhabitants from taking vengeance upon them, by cutting off their stragglers, destroying their intelligence, and furnishing a pursuing army every facility for capturing them. Yet such was the fatal apathy of the Bengalees—an apathy produced no less by superstitious fear, than by the destruction, by the damping influence of caste, of all those feelings, which make a man anxious for the benefit of the whole community—that they either refused intelligence or wilfully misled our troops. “In spite,” says Warren Hastings, “of the strictest orders issued, and the severest penalties threatened, to the inhabitants, in case they fail in giving intelligence of the approach of the Sennassies, they are so infatuated by superstition, as to be backward in giving the information, so that the banditti are sometimes advanced into the very heart of our provinces, before we know anything of their motions; as if they dropped from Heaven to punish the inhabitants for their folly.”\* The Sennassie Fakirs were never conquered. After defeating a detachment of sepoys, and so devastating the country that their visit and various depredations proved a serious blow to the revenues of the Company, as well from real as pretended losses, they finally made good their retreat to

\* Letter to Sir G. Colebrooke, March 1773.

the wild country which lies between India, Thibet, and China.

The Fakir and Bairagee, covered with sores and filth—an object often as disgusting as can well be imagined—still wanders through India, still extorts alms from the inhabitants, and is still suspected of being a cut-throat and a murderer. It is not to be supposed that this endurance of the atrocities of combinations of villains, the origin of which we have referred to, what may be called, the patriotic feelings being annihilated by caste, is only exhibited in the passive endurance of such monster coalitions as those of the Sennassie Fakirs and Pindarrees; it extends to minor abuses. Not to mention the Nagas of Bundelcund, the Ghonds, the Bheels, the Mairs, and the Puharrees,\* as arrant cattle-lifters as ever were our own Highlanders, whose periodic descents from their hills have been endured by the neighbouring nations for so long, without any attempt at resistance, we may notice that in every large town in Upper India, there are gangs of bullies,† who make a living by perambulating the streets and picking quarrels with respectable people. From these they extort money, by the

\* Vide Heber's Journey, for interesting account of Puharrees, the "Gael's of the East," and their kindred, the Bheels and the Gooand tribes. They are, apparently, branches of the same great family, which pervade all the mountainous centre of India. Their method of living has for a long period been the exact counterpart of that of the Scotch Highlanders, down to the middle of the eighteenth century. See also, MacFarlane's India, vol. ii. p. 118, &c.

† See Shore's India, vol. i. p. 383.

threat of lodging in the magistrate's office a complaint which they have always witnesses at hand to attest.

In every market town in the upper provinces, there are gangs of self-constituted weighmen, chokedars,\* heads of markets, and a variety of other people, who interfere with the farmers and dealers in a most vexatious manner, and whose sole livelihood is derived from the illegal fees and exactions which they levy upon the people. Such, and a thousand similar nuisances, are endured in India from that lack of unity of public opinion and purpose, which can alone effectually repress them.

Before investigating the influence of caste upon the intercourse existing between Europeans and the natives, we will remark on its effects upon the style in which Europeans in India live.

The number of servants they entertain, cannot fail to attract the attention of every one on his first arrival at Calcutta. It is in this particular that he is first made acquainted with caste, and it too often happens, that he never gains any further knowledge on the subject. He finds the subdivision† of labour owing to this cause, and the want of machinery for the simplest purposes, carried almost to infinity. There is no such thing as a "servant of all work." His dressing boy will not light or extinguish the lamp. His palanquin-bearer will not hold his horse. His cook will not

\* A kind of policemen.

† See "Letters from an Eastern Colony," 1829, p. 7, et seq.



wash his own utensils ; he wants coolies and chuprasies, to bear burdens and go errands. His khamsa, or butler, must have his matey, his groom must have his grass-cutter, his gardener his water-drawer, his washerman his ironing-man. The man who supplies him with milk cannot furnish him with butter : they are distinct offices, which must not be confounded. He soon finds that he must necessarily keep about six times as many servants as in England. He proceeds to hire them, and here usually commits a blunder, which has, perhaps, done more to restrain our intercourse with the natives, than any other circumstance.

The English in India being an excessively migratory people, it often happens that, after a short time, their whole establishment may have to be broken up, or removed to a place at several hundred miles' distance. Moreover, every Englishman on his first arrival is generally unacquainted with the language of the country, and knows little of that almost boundless subject, Oriental etiquette. He is too an eater of veal and beef, and an habitual offender against Hindoo religion. Hence, the better class of native domestics prefer the service of one of their own nation and religion, where their position, and the duties which they have to perform, are by no means so degrading. Those who present themselves to our *parvenu*, are individuals of but doubtful character, Pariahs accustomed to every indignity, or infamous wretches who have forfeited their standing in society, by disgraceful



crimes. From these, without requiring any testimonials or character, he usually selects those of the lowest class—maters, choomars, and such like—as they are more willing than others to neglect the orders of caste, and perform any service that is expected. Here is an effectual bar at once put upon all intercourse with the superior castes of natives. How could a high caste Bramin visit and eat with a man whose viands he knows are dressed by a mater cook, and perhaps brought to the table by a choomar?\*

The establishments of Englishmen, too, are so large, that they are often not acquainted with even a tithe of their household, and usually leave its government to one favourite domestic, whose conduct they consider most analogous to that of an English servant. This man, who may be one of the low castes, plays off his master to his own advantage; only allows of those servants who are subservient to his will; perhaps fills the house with men of the lowest caste; and uses every precaution for making his master unapproachable by all but those who present a *douceur*—who unlock the presence-chamber with a silver key. How can a Rajpoot, for instance—proud of his caste and honour, and the many noble virtues for which his race have been so justly celebrated—how can he, some descendant perhaps of the Rajahs or Rahtors of Canouge, or Jyepoor, or some scion, it may be, of the kings of Marwar, who through a thousand generations at last trace their descent from the gods—

\* The table servants, however, are generally Mahomedans.

whose haughty dames hardly considered even the Great Mogul, when in the height of his power, an equal match for them\*—how, I say, can he be supposed capable of stooping to coax and mollify the vanity of a man, who, notwithstanding the extreme latitude of an Indian *darbar*,† would be by all sense of decency forbidden to sit in his presence? How can he be expected to do all this for no other purpose than merely to pay a visit of civility to one whose acquaintance is after all of little or no moment?

On the other part, the Englishman cares little for visiting the native, any further than as a matter of policy. Hence, from the effects of caste on the one side, and from negligence on the other, has arisen that lack of intercourse between the English and natives, which is so much to be regretted, and which, since our dominion in India has been firmly established, has, we regret to say, been on the increase. The Mussulmans, who,‡ some fifty or sixty years back, would eat and visit with us, have now completely renounced the custom.

Though natives of distinction are constantly invited to the Government-house and to Government fêtes,

\* "The Ranah of Oodeypoor is said to be descended in a right line from the Sun without any debasing mixture, having resisted all attempts of the Emperors of Delhi to effect an intermarriage of the houses. He reckons in his pedigree one or two avatars."—Heber's Journal, vol. ii. p. 474.

† Every one who comes, even to small farmers and shopkeepers, after making their salaam, sit down.—Shore's India, vol. ii. p. 113.

‡ See Shore's India, vol. ii. p. 110.

though they may be occasionally found at evening parties, it is an occurrence of extreme rarity to meet them at private entertainments. It must not be supposed, however, that caste is the only bar to greater intercourse; other causes quite as important exist. Prejudices in regard to food, difference in religion and language, want of topics of conversation common to the two people, may be among the unavoidable causes which produce this state of things. But much also depends upon our own habits, and our negligence in cultivating their acquaintance. The French, who, in other respects, left behind them in India a most disgraceful reputation, were, owing to that politeness and love of society characteristic of the nation, much our superiors in acquiring the confidence of the natives. Heber relates, that in the Dooab\* the rule of Perron and Des Boignes was in his day still regretted by those who contrasted the sociability of the French with the distant manners and repulsive conduct of the English. It too often happens that we make little or no attempt to conform to the habits of the natives; that we neglect their salutes; that we know or make no difference between our conduct to individuals of distinction and to men of no rank;† that

\* See Journey, vol. iii. p. 337. Generals Perron and Des Boignes were employed by Scindia.

† In striking contrast with the conduct of Europeans in India was that of the Nepaulese princes when in England. They are said to have employed an Englishman to explain to them the rank and proper method of addressing those persons whom they met.

we learn Hindostanee from persons of low caste and position, and speak it vulgarly. These and other drawbacks to our intimate intercourse with the natives might be alleged; but they do not fall within our present inquiry.\*

\* The indigo planters, who are much more particular in these points than the officers of Government, are in consequence often treated with much greater respect by the natives.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE EFFECTS OF CASTE ON THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF INDIA.

“The moral effect of the institution of castes is to create prejudices: all prejudices are pernicious, yet what human society is without them?”—*Rickards' India.*

INDIVIDUALS have, in all ages, tightened the connecting links of language, kindred, or country, by forming themselves into associations, independent of the grand community to which they belong. How far such a division of society into distinct orders is conducive to the moral character of its members, is an interesting subject for philosophical discussion. In India, the system of castes affords a practical, and living instance to throw light upon such an investigation. We there find a people split into sections, connected by no sentiments, either of mutual regard or of mutual interest; we find everywhere the *entente cordiale* destroyed, and every social feeling blunted;

and we look in vain for *active virtues*.\* These require a wide field for their development, and such is wanting among a people divided into numberless little circles, whose coherence with one another, and with the whole mass, is of the feeblest nature. Hence, though the moral character of the Hindoos is not deficient in goodness, its nature is rather negative than positive—a refraining from what is bad, rather than a performance of what is good. Their virtues are not those which arise from the dictates of a good conscience, and which impel men to do and suffer everything in the carrying out in practice what they hold good in theory, as a blind, unthinking adherence to particular rules, the grounds of which they have never doubted, the consequences of which they have never examined. Heber's character of them is, "They are lively, intelligent, and interesting. The national temper is decidedly good, gentle, and kind. They are sober, industrious, and affectionate to their relatives, faithful to their masters, and easily attached by kindness;" and yet he admits that "their morality does not extend beyond positive obligations, and where these are wanting, they are oppressive, cruel, and treacherous."

Such is their religious character, measured by the Christian standard. It were, indeed, a bootless task to compare it with the injunctions of their own creed; to examine whether or not the effect of caste

\* Sir J. Malcolm, Pol. Hist. of India, p. 513, remarks the same of our sepoys. "Their virtues," say he, "are more of a *passive* than an *active* nature."



was to preserve in the people an obedience to the dogmas of their Vedas, Shasters, and Puranas, and make them, in that sense of the word, religious.

Let it be sufficient to observe, that whatever it once was, or whatever it ought theoretically to be, Hinduism is, and has long been, a mere lifeless heap of ceremonies, many of them both unmeaning and degrading, and some possessing a most immoral tendency. To trace the effects of caste upon such of these as have been left entire by our Indian government, were in truth a useless toil. More interesting is it to compare its moral effects upon the people at large, weighed, as they ought to be, in the Christian balance, especially as in this they will be weighed, when the absurdities of Hinduism, and the other idolatrous systems of India, have yielded, as, doubtless, they will yield, to the enlightening influence of Christianity.

Among the good effects of caste, we have before noticed its pleasing influence upon those feelings which have reference to the particular social circle of each individual. It is there that it shines most brightly; it is there that we might be led to pronounce it an excellent institution, did not other considerations direct our judgment into another channel. Here, however, is one important point on which it exercises moral influence on the people; another we will mention.

The division of Menu is, as we have before said, no longer in existence: to this, however, there is some

limitation. The other classes, though sometimes kept together as castes by the same religious rites, are mixed up in civil society; and being under no chiefs, except the ordinary magistrates of the country, have in the course of ages become confounded. This, however, is not altogether the case with a portion of the military class. The Rajputs of Rajasthan\* profess, and are by most considered, to be a portion of the Cshatrya. They are born soldiers, divided into sections, each of which has its hereditary leader; and their government bears a strong resemblance to the feudal constitutions of the middle ages. All are united together by the strongest feelings of caste, and of military devotion. From this state of things have arisen many noble qualities. They are guided by rules of honour of a very high order, which they hold it disgraceful to violate. Their land has ever been the focus of Indian chivalry, the home of Hindoo heroes. They treat their women with a respect unusual in the East, and in return are civilized and polished by their influence. They are noted for their lofty ideas of independence. They indulge in no prostrations. Soortan, one of their chiefs, when conquered, would not bend, even to Aurangzib. They are more especially noted for their gratitude, and faithful adherence to their word. "I am a Rajput—how can I deceive you?" is the expostulation they will offer to those who doubt their honour.

\* See Tod's Rajasthan. Elphinstone's India, p. 312. The Ayeen Akberry asserts (vol. ii. p. 377), that the Rajpoots are of the Cshatrya.

Yet among these men, caste shows one of its darkest features. With them the pride of birth is carried to an extravagant pitch. Their hills defended them from foreign invaders. Revolutions which swept away successive races of kings and nobles from the plain of Indostan, never affected them. Their blood, the purest in the East, flowed through generations of princes ; from heroes who once ruled on earth, but now in heaven. The chiefs, for example, of Marwar, exult in a line of ancestors who for 1,300 years held sway in Canouge, and could at any time bring half a million of soldiers to the field. The descendants of such men hesitate to marry their daughters to low-born Hindoos of ambiguous caste. Husbands of fitting rank and condition cannot always be found ; and the Rajputs escaped the dilemma by the crime of infanticide. Their female children were, at one time, nearly all put to death. In fact, the Jharejas of Cutch, by the intricate regulations of caste peculiar to themselves, were placed in such a position that they could not find an individual with whom a daughter of theirs could be suitably matched. Hence, at one time, all were destroyed. Of late, however, this custom has been for the most part abolished ; its relinquishment being insisted upon, as one of the terms on which they were to be considered British allies.

Caste, again, has had an ameliorating effect upon the character of Hindoo *slavery*. In Ceylon,\* the Covia,

\* See Slavery and the Slave Trade, from official sources, pp. 6, 58, &c.

Nallua, and Palla castes are all slaves ; the same is the case with the Puncham and Bundam castes in Mysore and the Carnatic. In Malabar, and in some of the northern provinces, there are prædial slaves, like the serfs of Russia, attached to the soil. In general, however, slavery is a condition entirely independent of caste. The Sudras,\* though placed by the code of Menu in the most contemptible position, are by no means considered as "*ascripti glebæ*." Domestic slavery, however, has always existed in India. Recent regulations of the supreme government have, we are aware, made it unlawful, and have in consequence done much towards its abolition. The mind of the Asiatic,† however, does not possess that indomitable spirit of freedom which characterizes European nations. The careless, easy subsistence, which attends the mild species of slavery in general prevalent in the East, is preferred by the indigent to the precarious life of freedom indeed, but often of starvation. The abolition of slavery will be a work of time. Orders of council may have destroyed many of its cruelties, but they have not effected its annihilation. It is still everywhere prevalent, but in a form, so mild, "that a stranger might reside in the country for fifty years, and unless he made inquiry, he would probably not have an idea

\* Elphinstone, p. 185.

† The case of the Cappadocians, who preferred despotism to a liberal constitution, offered them by the Romans, will readily occur to the classical reader.

that slavery existed, so little is there to meet the eye.”\*

Its causes are various. In some cases crime, or inability to defray a debt, have subjected individuals to perpetual servitude. Many voluntarily sell themselves to obtain the means of subsistence. Others are home-born, or are children sold by their parents during a time of famine, or in consequence of some domestic calamity. Many were formerly enslaved by Thugs, who had previously destroyed their parents; or were kidnapped by the Banjaras, a tribe of wandering herdsmen, who convey corn from one part of the country to another, and are, in short, the corn-factors of India. The Gosains,† a species of hermit, deal largely in this traffic, purchasing children, especially those of the higher castes, primarily for the purpose of rearing them as disciples, or in default of their evincing any aptitude for such a life, they are sold to others.

It is obvious, then, that men of every caste, may in a native state become slaves. Hence, men of high caste not unfrequently are in servitude to those of lower rank, whose religious feelings induce them to honour and assist, rather than injure and oppress them. How materially must their condition be ameliorated by the prevalence of such opinions!

In the Himalayah mountains,‡ for instance, if a

\* See Elphinstone, p. 185. “Domestic slavery in a mild form is almost universal.”—See also Campbell's India, p. 70.

† See Slavery and the Slave Trade in India.

‡ Shore's Notes on India, vol. ii. p. 404.



man have an only daughter and a slave, provided he be of good caste, it is not at all uncommon for him to give the slave his daughter in marriage, and at his death to leave him all his property. Such a transaction, though by no means unusual in the East, is one which but few Europeans (notwithstanding the boasted liberality of our sentiments) would be disposed to imitate.

It is a question whether slavery in India was ever sanctioned by British law. By the Mahometan code, which, in most cases, is ordered to be observed in our courts of justice, slaves are subject to many disqualifications. Their evidence is inadmissible; they cannot buy, sell, or inherit; they are ineligible to any civil office. Yet the practice in India among Mahometans, even before the English rule, had long been at variance with the law. Kindness shown to slaves, but above all their manumission, have ever been considered acts of piety. In India, as in all countries subject to the crescent, it was no uncommon thing for slaves to rise to the highest offices of state, and even to that of *vizier*, or prime minister.\*

Much of this gentle nature of Hindoo slavery is doubtless to be attributed to the very modified form in which it has always prevailed among the professors of

\* Sebektegin, and his master Alptegin, the founder of the house of Ghazni, are well known instances. See Elphinstone, p. 273.—The custom of the Mamlukes on this point is notorious. The same exists, though in a less degree, throughout the whole of Turkey.—See Gen. Regnier's "*State of Egypt after the Battle of Heliopolis*," p. 31, for some very pertinent remarks on this subject.



El Islam, the conquerors of India who have best amalgamated with the native inhabitants. Yet much, too, is to be attributed to those sentiments, arising from caste, which are constantly placing the slave and his master on the same level, and sometimes disturbing, and even reversing their civil grades.

With regard to many Hindoo customs, repugnant to European sentiments, it has ever been the policy of our Indian Government to sap the foundations on which they rest, and yet to avoid, as much as possible, any direct legislation on the subject. Such has been the case with slavery. They found it everywhere prevalent, but in general it was of the patriarchal character, so gentle and lenient as rarely to gall the feelings or rouse indignation. Their *zenanas* and *harems* were its strongholds. An invasion of the sanctity of these would have been productive of the most awful consequences to the morals and habits of the people. It was rife in the army. To extinguish it there would have alienated from us the affections of the whole native force. "I know," said the Duke of Wellington, in a discussion on this subject—"I know, that in the hut of every Mussulman soldier in the Indian army, there is a female slave who accompanies him in all his marches, and I would recommend your Lordships to deal lightly with this matter, if you wish to retain your sovereignty in India." No wonder, then, that the measures of our Indian Government with regard to slavery were marked with the most extreme caution. It was

fostered by the Bramins; it was necessary to their temple ritual; it was blended with every religious ceremony which was held most sacred. A rash interference with these, would have raised a tornado of popular indignation, which might have swept us from the peninsula, and arrested for many an age the progress of that enlightenment and civilization which we are gradually introducing.

Hardly ten years have elapsed since the subject of slavery was forced upon the notice of the British public by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Among its grossest features then so mercilessly exposed, was the trade\* in slaves, which was carried on, not merely from one part of the Company's possessions to another, but even with foreign countries, especially with the Arabs of the Straits of Mozambique, and the eastern coast of Africa, and the pirates of Malaya. This abominable traffic, as horrible in its character and results as that between the western coast of Africa and America, was immediately pronounced illegal, and vigorously repressed. Domestic slavery it was not thought prudent openly and distinctly to abolish, but all civil disqualifications arising from it were quietly removed. Slavery has at present no legal existence in India, though probably from the indirect method by which it was abolished, the majority of the natives are unacquainted with the fact. The general tenor of our administration, by weakening and rendering ambiguous the title to all

\* Slavery and the Slave Trade, p. 29.

such property, is everywhere adverse to slavery. Masters feel their power gone, and domestic servitude, without any disturbance or evil effects, is being quietly extinguished throughout the whole of the Company's possessions.

But to return to our subject. There is another point in which the moral influence of caste is conspicuous, and on which we must dwell. In India, as in England, *a man's caste is his character*, and in both countries it will often be lost by crime. The Hindoos, though their religion may have an immoral tendency—though our courts of justice may disclose scenes of violence and wrong, which but ill accord with their ordinarily passive spirit, and their gentle and polished address, which has ever made them objects of sympathy and interest—are on the whole a virtuous nation. In large towns, where they have mixed much with Europeans, they have gained our vices without acquiring our virtues; and too often exhibit themselves in our courts of law as the tools of perjury and forgery. In remote villages,\* however, they are innocent, temperate, and honest; and the transgression of most of even our moral laws, would draw down upon them the indignation of their caste. Though the disadvantages of being an outcast have been probably much exaggerated, yet still it brings with it, in the parts of India least affected by European influence,† a certain amount of moral

\* Pamphlet by the celebrated Baboo Ram Mohun Roy.

† Caste may be regained in some cases and places more easily than

punishment. In this way, caste elevates the morals of the people.

We must not omit to draw attention to the fact, of *caste and superstition acting and reacting upon one another*. It is superstition which guarantees the existence of the arbitrary divisions of Hindoo society. On the other hand, it is caste, entering with its minute injunctions into every act of life, and enthralling the spirit of mental freedom, which has for so long a period aided in sinking the Hindoos in superstition, as abject and unmeaning as that of many nations, their inferiors in refinement. This will appear the more remarkable when we consider that, from the earliest times, they have enjoyed many of the advantages of civilization—its learning, its liberality of feeling, and its encouragement to improvement and progress in thought and ideas, as well as in arts and sciences. When we consider, moreover, that there have resided among them for more than a century thousands of Europeans, eager to sow the seeds of nobler sentiments.

Of all the singular anomalies to which superstition has been found to give rise, *religious mendicity*, and the honour paid to sanctified beggars, bears the palm. We have previously noticed the character of the *fakirs*, *yogis*, and *bairagees*, who, covered with sores, and smeared with cow dung, wander from village

in others. In the neighbourhood of Calcutta, for instance, a feast reinstates a person in the good graces of his caste, unless his transgression be of a more than ordinarily deep dye.

to village; or stand in the same position, until their limbs and muscles have lost their proper shape, and plants have sprung up and mantled them with vegetation. In addition to these, crowds of sturdy beggars, in general members of some one of the religious castes, parade the country, and extort a plentiful subsistence, from the united effects of compassion, fear, and superstition. Every village has its separate bands. They may be seen each day roaming from house to house, and extorting their customary handful of rice, or other present, from the poor Ryot, with a regularity and insolent importunity worthy of the mendicant friars of the middle ages. It has been calculated that no less than one-eighth of the inhabitants of Bengal and Behar, or about two millions, subsist in this manner; and cannot levy less than two or three millions sterling from the wretched Ryots.\*

Of the religious duties of the Bramins and some other castes, begging is the most conspicuous. It is a duty incumbent upon all who aim at distinguished sanctity, to make mendicity the only source of their subsistence. No land has been assigned to them, either by the Hindoos or the Moslems: they are professed beggars.† The youthful Bramin, as soon as invested with the poita or cotton thread of his order, asks alms of his parents and the surrounding company. Deep is his degradation when forced to betake himself to an honest trade. The Bramin, like his congeners

\* Ward's Hindoos.

† Ibid.



in name the sacred bulls, passes a life of dignified ease. The drone of society, he lives from his neighbour's store, and looks down with contempt on those who obtain an honest livelihood by their industry.\* The Veda Bramins of Bengal, who live by explaining the Veda, and by begging, despise those of Orissa or the Cuttack, who live by commerce or agriculture, and the former alone are held in estimation by the pious Hindoo.

The method by which the Bramin gains his livelihood is continually placing him in the most ambiguous and false positions; but he sticks at no methods of accomplishing his purposes, and upholding his influence.† Without shame he will employ the basest means of attaining his ends,‡ and is, as one of their members graphically described them to Abbé Dubois, "an ant's nest of lies and impostures." Yet, notwithstanding, they still retain their influence with the people.

It would be excessively difficult to determine from what feeling of the human mind respect for religious mendicancy, which is not by any means peculiar to India, though there carried to the highest pitch, can arise. Its existence, however, for any length of time depends, we are apt to think, upon superstition on the one part, and the absence of a public opinion on

\* Asiatic Researches, Vol. xv. p. 193.

† Several acts of the Indian Government have now considerably repressed mendicancy.

‡ *E. g.* Sitting Durnha.



the other. These, we imagine, are the two causes of its prevalence in India. The latter, viz., the want of public opinion, is the direct offspring of caste, whilst superstition is very materially upheld by the same institution.

In the first place, it was superstition which gave religious mendicants their power, and for ages it has been the same cause which has supported it. The Bramins themselves flocked round the hearths of the great, who took a pride in supporting them. It was on the rich rather than the poor that they lived. In later times our government, by its levelling and equalizing power, has impoverished the majority of the rich Hindoo families; the Bramins, in consequence, now gain their chief subsistence from the poor, and are beginning to be felt as an incubus upon the villages. Superstition, however, still has its power. The press and public opinion, which in Europe would destroy or limit their exactions, is practically powerless. The former is nearly confined to Europeans and the native chiefs, whilst the latter hardly exists. Among a simple and prejudiced people, where the lines of demarcation between the different classes of society are drawn strong, sharp, and unbending, no universality of opinion can possibly prevail.

We should not omit a peculiarity, which has been remarked in the character of Bramins, men of the highest caste, and in Mussulman families of great consideration, among whom the pride of family produces the same effect as caste, whilst in some cases this,

together with other Hindoo customs, has been adopted. Such men are always found either of the most excellent character, or guilty of the most audacious crimes. They always fly to the greatest extremes, and are either very good or very bad.\*

Another singularity, too, attaches itself to these classes. When a European who is within the pale of respectability is tempted to be guilty of anything which those of his own standing would consider mean and disgraceful, he usually endeavours to conceal his actions, or at any rate to disguise them under false pretences. This is not the case with the individuals just mentioned.† They will be guilty of the most disgraceful acts, without attempting in the slightest degree to hide, justify, or palliate them ; and that, too, in matters which it would not be difficult to conceal. They appear as if they were wholly indifferent as to how their character stood with the world. This is a peculiarity for which it is extremely difficult to account. Some have referred it to the recklessness arising from a continued course of profligacy, others to the supposition that they consider themselves placed by their rank, situation, and caste, completely above all scandal. To this explanation we would incline from the following considerations.

Among the lower classes, the loss of caste, whatever it might have been formerly, is now but a trifling inconvenience. A man does certain things for which his friends and relations refuse to eat with him, until

\* Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 185.

+ Ibid., Vol. ii. p. 184.

he has given a grand entertainment, after which he is again received on his former footing. If, owing to personal pique or malice, this fails, unless his crime be of a very disgraceful character, he readily finds another caste willing to receive him. Among the higher classes, however, greater dignity is preserved. Caste, if actually lost, is not easily regained, but its forfeiture very rarely occurs. Men of undoubted rank care little about these things; mutual forbearance is very largely practised, "*dant veniam corvis.*" "These absurdities," said a Bramin, who had served up a meal to an Englishman on his (the Bramin's) own dishes, "are very well for the ignorant low castes to make a fuss about, but any man of sense knows that a little sand and water purifies metal dishes from any stain."\* If a person of high rank happen to become an outcast, there is no grade of equal respectability to that of his own into which he can enrol himself. For the opinion of his inferiors he cares nothing; in fact, theoretically, it is presumption, almost amounting to a crime, for a Sudra to entertain an opinion relative to the actions of men of the superior classes. From all these causes, a bad man, whose innate feelings of right and wrong are blunted, and who has stifled those pangs of conscience which, in the case of a good man committing sin, are the most terrific of all punishments, has nothing to control his conduct. There is no reason then for him to exhibit any mawkish sensibility, and throw a veil over those deeds, the credit

\* Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 477.

of which he feels will never affect him with injury or uneasiness.

In regard to the character of the Braminical caste, we will notice a further peculiarity : one of the popular Hindoo *mantras*, or forms of prayer, commences with the following confession of faith :—" All the universe is under the power of the gods ; the gods are subject to the power of the *mantras* ; the *mantras* are under the power of the Bramins ; the Bramins are, therefore, our gods." In accordance with this, the Bramin has a consciousness of his own excellence that never forsakes him, but enables him to support his rank under all circumstances of life. Whether rich or poor, in prosperity or adversity, he regulates himself continually by the sentiment which tells him that he is the most perfect of all created things ; that he is the very god of his race ; that, whatever be his condition, other men are infinitely beneath him ; that there is nothing on earth at all comparable with his own well-ordered customs and usages. The structure of society, of course, forbids any general display of these sentiments. There are not wanting instances, however, of this overweening idea of their rank having been actually carried into practice. The cynical pride and independence of Diogenes was surpassed in the distant East. Greek authors relate that fifteen Bramin ascetics scorned an invitation to go and converse with Alexander, and bade the Macedonian hero come himself and visit them.

Perhaps we shall be enabled to form a clearer con-

ception of the benefits which caste has conferred upon the people of India, if we pause for a moment to consider what, in all probability, would have been their condition if unaffected by its existence. The peculiar character of the climate, the general fertility of the soil, the facility with which the necessaries of life are obtained, would relax the energies of the most active race of men, and produce that indolent disposition which distinguishes the inhabitants of the tropics. Harassed by perpetual invasions, with her society rent by successive revolutions, and every avenue to power, and every inducement to exertion taken away, her people would have indulged the inclinations which their climate engendered, and would have sunk into the lowest barbarism. This has been, in a considerable degree, the case with the Pariahs; the fact of their residence among a civilized people having scarcely at all operated to its prevention. They are exempt from the regulations of caste; they are free from all those restrictions of honour and shame, which are dependent upon them. They have, in consequence, abandoned themselves, without reserve, to the indulgence of all their vile propensities. There is no fear of exclusion from the society of honourable men to restrain them from the commission of every excess. Aware that they have nothing to gain or lose in the esteem of their superiors, they give themselves up, without shame or scruple, to every description of vice.\* Hence, they have become in appearance gross

\* Dubois, p. 459.



and sensual. They are addicted to drunkenness, gluttony, and the foulest feeding. In the south of India they may be seen disputing with the birds of prey for the carrion and garbage which is thrown forth from the cities. Such are the Pariahs in districts of Southern India, in which they are numerous. Wretches more abominable or disgusting, it would be scarcely possible to imagine.

Without doubt there have been other causes which have promoted civilization among the Hindoos. It is obvious, however, that the fact of an employment or profession being imposed upon every individual, must have materially counteracted that tendency to inactivity which is engendered by a warm climate, and must have prevented the people from retrograding in the march of improvement.

Again, it has been the influence of this artificial order which makes a community feel the faults of one member as reflecting disgrace on the whole, as long as they remain unpunished, which has tended to the preservation of good morals. Each caste is obliged to take justice into its own hands, for the purpose of avenging its honour, and restraining within the bounds of good order the individuals who compose it. Besides flagrant infractions of moral laws, such as drunkenness, adultery, and the like, there are many other faults of a scandalous nature, of which caste takes cognizance, and which, as not being infractions of civil laws, would otherwise escape unpunished. These in western nations are repressed by the power of public



opinion; by the voice of public indignation. In India they fall under the cognizance of a man's caste, and are, perhaps, more quietly and conveniently punished by the fiat of a section of society, than by the tardy sentence of the whole.

So great has been the influence of caste upon the morals of the people, that it has successfully counterbalanced the evil effects of a religion which encourages vice and depravity. It has rendered the general sentiments of the people strongly in favour of morality, although all the ceremonies of their worship have a precisely contrary tendency. Although in too many cases its authority is employed in animadverting on frivolous rites, rather than in extirpating real crimes, for which a culpable indulgence may be sometimes shown, yet its general effect has been, as we have before remarked, to preserve among the natives a morality, in many cases of a very high order.

## CHAPTER V.

CASTE AS IT AFFECTS THE CONVERSION OF THE  
HINDOOS TO CHRISTIANITY.

..... "Souvent la sagesse suprême  
Pour chasser le démon se sert du démon même."

*Boileau, Ep. 12.*

It is in reference to its supposed effects on retarding the conversion of the Hindoos to Christianity, that caste has of late attracted the attention of Europeans. For about fifty years our missionaries have laboured with devoted assiduity to spread the Gospel in India, and yet it remains a Pagan country. This too, although of late we have been masters of the whole peninsula, and our missionaries have enjoyed many advantages, which of necessity arise from that circumstance. Though they have been of a nation, which for power, enterprise, and learning, have, above all other Europeans in the East, a prestige and celebrity, yet at this moment, of the one hundred and twenty millions at least, or as some will have it, the two

hundred millions who own our sway, perhaps (Europeans inclusive) not one hundred and twenty thousand are Protestant Christians even in name.\* We speak not of the nations of converts, made in times past by the sword of the Portuguese and the fighting priests of King John.† We speak not of those converted by the followers of Loyola, by forging a Veda assimilating Christianity to the superstitions of every sect in India and China, and so degrading our sacred religion as to draw down the especial indignation of even the Pope himself. We speak not of them. They sowed, they emphatically sowed the wind, and they reaped the whirlwind. As is their wont, they meddled with political events. They were expelled from the country, and with the exception of the missions of Madura in the South of India—which appear to have always existed in a flourishing state, and which we propose hereafter noticing—but few of their converts, such as they were, are to be found in India. They returned to heathendom as soon as the efficient cause of their profession was withdrawn.

To account for the indifferent success which has attended our own missionary enterprise in Indostan, it has been too long the custom to adduce the insuperable obstacles to conversion presented by caste. Europeans, as we have before remarked, have gained

\* The Reports of the Calcutta and Madras Bible Societies lay the number at the close of 1851 at 103,154.

† Cardinal Enrique was another Portuguese monarch who gave great encouragement to forced conversions.

their notions of its character from publications, derived from the comments of Pundits and the code of Menu, rather than from unprejudiced accounts of the existing state of society in India. Viewing it through the medium of these, they have formed an exaggerated idea of the opposition, which it, directly or indirectly, offers to the spread of Christianity. We propose, then to consider—

First,—*What appear to have been the chief obstacles to the conversion of the Hindoos, and how far they are affected by caste ?*

Secondly,—*Whether caste does not, in some respects, pave the way for Christianity ?*

First.—Of the causes which have operated against the conversion of the Hindoos, we may notice, *especially, the inadequacy of the means employed.*

In the first place, until lately, the small number of our missionaries. We very rarely conceive a correct idea of the magnitude of our Indian empire, and of the myriads of human beings which it contains. In size, including the countries under its influence, it is not much less than the whole of Europe, and nearly as thickly peopled. Its inhabitants—distributed in twenty-four provinces, speaking thirteen polished languages—present the same diversity in appearance, character, religion and manners as do Europeans. They are, and have long been, a civilized people. Though neither so energetic, nor so cultivated as ourselves, there are some particulars, as for instance, in the facility with which they apply their mind to mathe-

matics and the exact sciences, in which they are undeniably superior to the generality of Europeans.\*

What striking effect can we expect that eight or ten missionaries, imperfectly acquainted with the language and customs of even one of the many nations which constitute our Eastern empire, could produce upon the opinions and religion of masses, so numerous and so wide-spread? Yet, for many years, this was precisely the state of things in India. At this present moment, notwithstanding the efforts made on all sides in aid of Christian missions, four hundred would cover the number of Europeans actively engaged in spreading the Gospel in Indostan.† Many years must necessarily elapse before a number of missionaries, comparatively so limited, can materially affect the opinions of so many millions of human beings. Though none but the ordinary prejudices of heathens opposed their exertions, it cannot be a subject of astonishment that success, strikingly remarkable, has not attended efforts so inadequate to the results contemplated.

The fact, too, of our *missionaries having chiefly addressed themselves to the lower classes, has especially militated against their cause*, in a country, in which, more than anywhere else, the lower ranks respect the higher, and the higher despise the lower. In India, as in every other part of the world, the vulgar appreciate the value of an opinion, according to the idea

\* See Campbell's *Modern India*, p. 60.

† See *Calcutta Review* for Sept. 1851, p. 241.

which they form of the merit of those who embrace it. Hence the most certain method of converting a people is to gain over their men of influence and respectability.

The success of humble instruments among the lower orders in the first spread of Christianity, are, we are aware, the objects imitated. Comparisons of this sort are often fallacious. Not to dwell upon the fact, that the poor of India are far from being in the same circumstances as the poor of Jerusalem, or some Roman province, our missionaries overstrain the analogy which they derive from the first Apostles, who, as well as their converts, were often persons of humble station. They forget the miraculous powers which they possessed, and which of themselves well account for the rapid progress of our religion during the first century of the Christian era. It cannot be asserted that those who are now engaged in propagating the Gospel, experience miraculous interpositions as obvious and incontrovertible as those which attended the ministry of the Apostles. It does not follow, that if miracles had been denied, the Apostles would have adopted precisely the same course which they did.

It is true the poor were to have the Gospel preached to them. It was to be their privilege, however, not their monopoly. The Apostles preached with energy and success to the poor ; but they never confined themselves to that class. If we examine the accounts of their labours, we shall find that there are



many instances of their addressing themselves to the rich and powerful.

Philip is sent on a special message, not to a poor man of little cultivation and limited capacity, but to the prime minister of an Abyssinian queen. Paul gets an introduction to the proconsul of Cyprus. It is not with slaves that he ordinarily associates. He converts the head of a family, and as a *consequence* baptizes his household, *i. e.*, his family and servants. At Thessalonica he lives with Jason, a man of consideration, whose *house* is assaulted by the mob. At Athens he disputes, not with paltry mechanics, whose ideas had never extended beyond the routine of their trade, but with philosophers, Epicureans and Stoics. From other sources we know pretty well what was the character of these. They might not always be rich; but they were not Pariahs and slaves. At Corinth, the *chief men of the Jews* are his hosts. At Ephesus, "*certain of the chief of Asia*" are his friends. We find throughout the whole of his Epistles the same undesigned indications of the respectability of those with whom he associated. The same may be predicated of the other Apostles.\* Why, then, should our missionaries in India have confined themselves, as they have done, so exclusively to the lowest castes, especially when the impolicy of it has been so evident, and the want of success among the lower orders so notorious?

We are aware that the ready answer will be given,

\* Many more proofs that the Apostles in general addressed themselves first to the powerful and influential might be brought forward.

that great difficulty has been experienced in gaining access to the higher classes. This may have been the case with those who, previous to addressing themselves to persons of respectability, have been in the habit of associating with the lower orders. We have reason to conclude, that when missionaries have at the first outset made their appeal to the leading men among the natives, such as their Rajahs, their learned pundits, or high-caste Bramins, a repulse has rarely been received.\*

As another cause which has retarded the progress of conversion, must be noticed the *injudicious conduct of many of our Indian missionaries*. The tide has now, for many years, run strongly in favour of almost every attempt to disseminate Christianity, from whatever quarter it may proceed, and without much inquiry into its probable results. In attempting conversions there has been exhibited more eagerness than discretion. In endeavouring to attain their object, missionaries have trusted too much to the efficacy of startling addresses, and to their power of refuting the arguments alleged in support of idolatry. They have neglected the minor requisites of success, and have thus often failed altogether.

Coming to India, with but a limited knowledge of its history, its customs, manners, and peculiar points of faith, they have false ideas of the simplicity and character of the people. They have regarded them more as semi-savages, than as a nation that was highly

\* *E. g.* Schwartz, the Jesuits, &c.

civilized when their own ancestors were but painted barbarians. Eager to commence their ministry, they have not waited to make themselves acquainted with the habits and language of the people, but preach and discuss the mysteries of religion with those to whom they have easiest access. These are the peasants and villagers: poor ignorant men of low caste, whose thoughts never soared beyond their daily wants, and the performance of a few simple ceremonies.

From such they learn to speak a vulgar dialect of the language, and to pronounce it with a vulgar accent. Nothing is more offensive than this to the high-caste Hindoo. With them, as with us, propriety of language is a mark of good breeding and of good society. It is, if possible, even of much greater importance, as a mark of caste. How can a man of high class submit to be taught by one, whose language and manners betray him as the companion of men of the lowest rank? In fact, he is viewed in nearly the same light as they are, and a man of high caste may even lose it by associating with him. It cannot be surprising that such a one makes but few converts. Very different has been the conduct of those who have been the most successful missionaries in India. Francis Xavier addressed himself almost exclusively to the higher castes. In a few years he planted churches in every country in the East. His proselytes are said to have been reckoned, not by thousands, but by millions.

It is in the southern part of India that the greatest

number of native Christians, Protestant as well as Romanist, are now found. A recent account of the Jesuit mission at Madura, lays the number of Roman Catholic converts there at one hundred and twenty thousand.\* The founder of this church was the illustrious Fra dei Nobili. On his arrival in India he found affairs in a state similar to that of the Protestant missions at the beginning of the present century. By eating beef and drinking wine the Portuguese missionaries were held in contempt. As is still the case with our own missionaries, by holding too familiar communication with Pariahs, by hiring them as servants, and by using indiscriminately the same dishes, there was raised an insurmountable barrier to their intercourse with Hindoos of respectability. The natives shrunk from embracing a religion, which involved such social difficulties.

Nobili resolved to strike at the root of this evil. "Like St. Paul," said he, "I will become a Hindoo to save these Hindoos, making myself all to all, to win all to Christ." After several years of study and preparation, with his superior's consent, he presented himself to the Bramins. He declared (what was strictly true, for he was the nephew of Cardinal Bellarmine) that he was not a Portuguese, but a Roman Rajah or noble, and a Suniassi or penitent, who had renounced the world and its enjoyments. As such he was clad in a peculiar dress, associated with Bramins alone, dwelt in the Bramini-

\* Father Strickland's Jesuit in India, p. 32, et seq.

cal quarter of the city, and bore a string, similar to the sacred *zenaar*. Like them, too, he buried himself in prayer and solitude, and rapidly acquired so widespread a character for sanctity, that all who met him, joining their hands above their heads, bowed to him as they would to a Bramin of the highest caste.

His first convert was no ignorant Pariah, but a Gourou or priest, who, after a discussion of twenty days, embraced Christianity. He was quickly joined by others of the highest castes. The example of these was imitated by the people at large; and Nobili lived to see, as the reward for forty-five years of missionary toil, a church in every town of importance in the South of India.

Nobili considered that the Bramins looked upon caste and its distinctions merely as marks of their nobility; that as such they might retain them even when converted. So clear and forcible was his explanation of this matter, that Gregory XV., by a Papal bull, sanctioned the regulations in reference to caste which he had established in the churches of India.\* Benedict XIV., carrying out the same policy still further, constituted a separate class of missionaries for the Pariahs.†

Europeans, owing to their first settlements having been made to the south of the peninsula, early became

\* He separated the castes in churches. His method at first gave great scandal in Europe. It was sanctioned by a bull in 1621. See Ranke's Hist. of Popes, p. 251, and Juvencii Historia Soc. Jesu, &c.

† Jesuit in India, p. 65.



acquainted with these unfortunate creatures. It was their wretched condition which first gave western nations an exaggerated idea of the horrors of being an outcast, and the fearful crimes which resulted from the institutions of Hindoo caste. As was the case with that singular race, the Cagots of southern France and the Pyrenees, they are treated with the most unmitigated contempt. The withering disgust with which the American regards the Negro is as nothing compared with that in which the Pariahs are held by the haughty Nayrs and Polygars of Malabar. This, however, is far from being the general condition of persons who have lost caste throughout the rest of India. In fact, it would appear that Europeans are incorrect in calling the Pariahs outcasts,\* inasmuch as they have never at any time been possessed of caste. They bear every mark of being a nation, whom their Hindoo masters having conquered reduced to the most degrading servitude.

Be this as it may, to have any intercourse with them, especially to visit them in their huts, was to become an object of universal detestation. If a missionary had done so, it was in vain that he afterwards addressed himself to the higher classes. To the conversion of this despised race some of the Jesuit fathers devoted themselves. Separating themselves entirely, even from their brethren in the same country, they endured all the privations imposed on Pariahs. One missionary might be seen, moving about on horseback,

\* See Jesuit in India, p. 20.



or in a palanquin, eating rice dressed by Bramins, and saluting no one as he passed. Another covered with rags walked on foot surrounded by beggars, and prostrated himself as his brother missionary passed, covering his mouth, lest his breath should infect the teacher of the great.

The effects of this twofold system of missions, which, as no longer essential, is now entirely discontinued, were most wonderful. In 1748 it is estimated that there were nearly one million native Romanists in Malabar and Coromandel, besides many flourishing missions in the north of Indostan.\* The Island of Ceylon is said to have been so completely Roman Catholic when it came into the possession of the Dutch, that, unable to convert the natives to Calvinism, they took measures to promote idolatry. In that selfish spirit of monopoly which disgraced all their transactions in the East, from the massacre of Amboyna downwards, they are said to have sent to the mainland for priests to re-establish Buddhism.

We have been thus diffuse on the subject of the Roman Catholic missions in India because, with the most limited means, they have had the most signal success.† The measures which they have adopted in

\* Father Strickland's Jesuit in India, p. 66.

† The missionaries manage to live and clothe themselves on *one shilling per day*! Though there are sixty-two Europeans employed, and many churches to repair, and endless lawsuits to undertake, the whole mission at Madura only costs 1,500*l.* per annum! See Strickland's Jesuit in India, p. 216.

regard to caste have materially contributed to this. We are aware that there are many other causes; that the pomp and ceremony of the Roman Catholic religion, the use of images, the assumed power of working miracles, imposing processions, accompanied with the beating of gongs and all the paraphernalia which attend the car of Kali or Shiva, in addition to theatrical and panoramic representations of the mysteries of Christianity, have had their effect;\* whilst cures performed at the shrines of saints, religious pilgrimages, honour paid to martyrs and their relics, together with many other of the peculiar customs and even tenets of the Romanist, have been familiar to the native mind in the rites of their own superstitions. We are aware that in the eyes of an uneducated Hindoo, the Roman Catholic ascetic appears identical with his own *yogi*, or the Mussulman *fakir*, and is in consequence entitled to

\* This is an improvement on the *mysteries* of the Middle Ages. "Another most efficacious means for conversion is the representation of the passion of our Saviour either by means of transparent pictures shown at night with a light behind, or by a sort of commemorative exhibition accompanied by a sermon."—Jesuit in India, p. 183. "Processions at night accompanied by immense torches, noise, fireworks, and barbarous music, are neither Catholic nor Protestant, but they are *essentially Indian*, and, therefore, perfectly lawful for the Indian Catholic, so long as the object for which they are made is Christian and Catholic."—Do., p. 185. Father Martin died in 1840; already as many as 15,000 pilgrims collect on the anniversary of the day of his death, and very many sick are cured, &c., Do., p. 130. F. dei Nobili and Brito had great success in working miracles, casting out devils, &c., p. 35. See also Ranke's History of Popes, p. 253.

similar respect. The shrine of the Virgin and the sanctum of a Buddhist temple are so similar in their decorations and character, that *Le Compte* records it as a remark of one of the missionaries themselves, that the devil must have got the start, and suggested these things, for the purpose of mortifying them. A worshipper of Vishnu regards with equal toleration the Buddhist, who gazes with religious awe on the coffer supposed to contain the tooth of Budh, and the Romanist, who piously venerates the bone of St. Thomas.

We are far from recommending to Protestants the charlatanism of Popish missionaries, yet in respect to caste there is much to learn from their caution and toleration. Caste, as we have so often observed, has been viewed almost entirely through the false medium of Shasters, and in consequence has been considered so highly idolatrous, as to be perfectly inconsistent with Christianity. Hence our missionaries have directed all their energies to its abolition, holding its relinquishment to be an essential condition of conversion. Whereas, however its origin may have been veiled in superstition, and its observance enforced by superstitious feelings, its practical working is a mere separation of society into grades, in the case of the higher classes being much the same as nobility among Europeans.

The prevalence of Christianity would in time modify these divisions, and correct any anomalies which exist; but these should not be considered as obstacles

to its diffusion. The difference between slave and master is often much greater than that which exists between a man of high and low caste, yet the apostles did not make the emancipation of slaves a necessary condition of embracing Christianity.

It is not the genius of our religion violently to disturb social grades; to incite a man of low caste to treat with disrespect those whom he has been taught to salute with the utmost deference. Viewing caste in this light, and we confidently believe that it is a view as Christian as it is practical and agreeable to common sense, we see no just cause for the crusade which our missionaries have waged against all its regulations—a crusade as useless as it has been costly and ineffective.

A writer on America observes,\* “There exists a penal law, deeply written in the minds of the whole white population, which subjects their coloured fellow-citizens to unconditional contumely, and never-ceasing insult. No respectability, however unquestionable, no property, however large, no character, however unblemished, will gain a man, whose body is (in American estimation) cursed with even a twentieth portion of the blood of his African ancestry, admission into society. They are considered as outcasts and vagrants on the face of the earth.” Such a description as this would give a very exaggerated idea of the social difference which exists in general, between the highest and lowest Hindoo castes. Who will tell us

\* Fearon's Letters on America, p. 168.

that the participation in such sentiments, and a submission to the rules of society to which they give rise, is utterly inconsistent with the profession of Christianity? The wildest bigot would not venture on this account to place the Americans, one-half of the Protestant Church, beyond the pale of salvation. Why, in the case of the heathen Hindoo, should we consider that an insuperable bar to conversion, which, in the case of the American, can co-exist with Christianity?

In India, the continual rise of new castes; the little notice which is attached to conversions to any creed which admits of caste;\* the facility with which such conversions are said to take place, prove that little, if any religious idea, is attached to this matter. The fact of the Mussulmans, and several other religious denominations, having embraced caste; the fact of the Sikhs having, as a matter of policy, first abolished, and afterwards allowed of its re-introduction, show how entirely it has now (whatever was once the case) become an affair more of social convenience than of religious necessity.

We see then no reason for our missionaries laying stress upon the abolition of caste. It is a matter which does not, properly, in anywise concern them. Their interference in its regulations is in the highest degree impertinent and injudicious. As a natural effect, it has been productive of immense harm to the cause which they advocate. Often, owing to the popular excitement which it has produced, it has been necessary

\* Shore's India, p. 460.



for the preservation of the public peace that Government should even discourage their efforts. That missionary wanders far from the path of duty who labours to set aside social grades and disturb organized society.

If the principles we have mentioned be admitted, it would be advisable tacitly to allow of the respect paid to members of the higher classes. If we consider how lightly they esteem men of the lower castes, and how readily these on the other hand acknowledge their superiority, it would be a step replete with prudence to select, in all cases in which it is possible, our catechists, and the ministers of religion, from them, in preference to the lower castes. Those persons whose minds are unimbued with the true feelings of the Hindoo in respect to the regulations of his caste, may be somewhat astonished at the proposition; we would even allow of it at the holy communion. It is an impropriety for a Bramin to use the same cup as a Sudra. Sooner than this should be an obstacle to his partaking of this mystery we would gratify his prejudice.

That a Bramin should communicate from a separate cup in the eyes of a Hindoo differs nothing from what we ourselves constantly observe without abhorrence in English churches: namely, that persons in the congregation, of the greatest respectability, are the first to advance to the altar, whilst the beadles and servants of the church, usually communicate last. We are aware that the intrusion of caste into this most sacred



ceremony has been universally condemned ; that Bishop Heber has spoken of it, *primâ facie*, as “an abominable claim.” We are still, however, of opinion, that if he could divest himself of preconceived ideas, and view caste in the light in which a Hindoo practically regards it, an unprejudiced Christian, sincerely anxious for the diffusion of the grand principles of his religion, would not condemn the conclusion to which we have arrived. Other cases, in which the regulations of caste should be tacitly acknowledged, might be mentioned, but the principle which applies to this, an extreme case, applies also to them.

We would reprobate, for instance, any unnecessary or officious interference with caste, in the case of those who attend our schools. It has there, sometimes, been employed as a method of punishment.\* Sons of men of high caste have been compelled to drink from the cup of the Pariah. Of proceedings like these, we would express the most unqualified disapprobation. The American missionaries, at one time, insisted upon

\* The native revenue collectors are said sometimes to avail themselves of caste, as a means of obtaining the taxes from those who are backward in their payments. This is, of course, done without the sanction or knowledge of Government. They select men of low caste, such, for instance, as workers in leather, or others whose occupations are offensive to the religious prejudices of the Hindoos, to serve notices, &c. On men of high caste, this is something analogous to, though by no means the same thing, as an English tax-gatherer selecting sweeps or scavengers, fresh from their respective functions, and directing them to force their way into an English gentleman's dining-room, and serve a notice upon him.

all their pupils eating beef cooked by a Pariah. This was the greatest degradation they could devise, and, of course, few but Pariahs would attend their schools. We are happy to state that measures so intolerant do not now thwart their usefulness.

If caste could be proved an item of the religious faith of the Hindoo, the scrupulosity of our missionaries might be defended. Such, however, is not *now practically* the case. Whatever may be said on this subject in books which we venture to say, not one native in ten thousand has ever read, whatever may be *theoretically* the case, caste is *practically* not a religious, but a social division of society. It is found existing among sects whose creeds are as different and as opposite as those of the Hindoo and the Christian. Is not, then, conduct such as our missionaries have exhibited, alien to that enlightened and liberal spirit of Christianity which received the impress of Divine authority at the council of Jerusalem? The sentence of St. James was, "not to *trouble* them which from the Gentiles are turned to God;" and it seemed good to the Holy Ghost to lay upon them no greater burden than mere necessary things.

The character of the Hindoo is completely different, and often at variance with that of the European. As far as human efforts are concerned in the spread of Christianity, the great secret is, to take the people according to their genius and disposition. Except where the essential truths of religion are concerned, their manners, customs, and feelings, should be care-

fully consulted. These are not to be judged of by European, but by Indian ideas. If in these respects our missionaries had been more careful—if before addressing themselves to the natives, they had gained an intimate acquaintance with their methods of social intercourse, their manner of salutation, and terms of politeness—if instead of Pariahs, they had selected for their domestics men of respectable caste—if in a thousand minute particulars, instead of setting at defiance, they had yielded to native ideas—there can be little doubt, that with all their appliances of wealth and intellect, our Eastern missions would have produced less barren results.

It must not be supposed, that we advocate the policy of Protestant missionaries addressing themselves with greater energy to the conversion of the higher classes, merely from the example of the Jesuits. It is well known, that within the nominal dominions of the Maha Rajah of Tanjore, there exist probably more congregations of Protestants, than throughout all the rest of India. The establishment of more than 200 such Christian communities was the work of one man, the indefatigable Schwärtz.

As the guardian of the infant Rajah, he became acquainted with all the grandees of the kingdom. From the conversion of his royal ward, he abstained from a feeling of honour which does credit to his character. To the higher ranks of the realm, to the nobles and men of cultivation, he preached with such success, that his converts have been vaguely estimated

at from fifteen to forty thousand.\* These were in general persons of education and respectability, who could give a reason for the faith that was in them, and who kept alive the spirit of their religion when, after fifty years of missionary labour, their noble pastor was removed. They were a class of men, we are told, as superior in knowledge and morality, as they were in social rank, to the Roman Catholics and the heathen by whom they were surrounded. Yet it was by no unwarrantable compromise with their prejudices, that success so extraordinary attended the active and fearless exertions of Schwärtz. He did not render himself contemptible or disagreeable, by needlessly offending against the common regulations of Hindoo society, however these might sometimes clash with European prejudices. Before men of respectability and mental culture, whose previous education had rendered them capable of appreciating his arguments, he unfolded the futility and absurdity of their superstitions. When such men were gained over, the common herd, who always imitate in their conduct and opinions the example of their superiors, were converted with facility.

Among other circumstances which have tended to retard the progress of conversion, is the *passion of the Hindoos for the extraordinary and the monstrous*. The Bramins observed, that no ordinary occurrences could move their gross imagination, or produce the least impression. They consequently compounded for them a

\* Heber's Journey, Vol. iii. p. 460.

religion that, both in theory and practice, surpasses the utmost bounds of extravagance. The miracles by which the truths of the successive revelations of our Scriptures are said to have been confirmed, are considered by them utterly inadequate to the importance of the doctrines which are promulgated. However wonderful they may appear to a common understanding, they are by no means so to the Hindoos. The deeds of Joshua, and other Jewish warriors and judges, are as nothing when compared with the achievements of Rama, and the miracles which attended his progress, when he subdued Ceylon, and conquered the giant Ravana, under an arch of whose lofty palace, the sun every day passed at noon. The strength of Samson dwindles into obscurity before the overwhelming energy of Bali and the giants. The resurrection of Lazarus itself is an ordinary event, of which they see frequent examples in the ceremonies of Vishnu. In disputations on religion the Bramins are said often to introduce such comparisons as the above.

Another obstacle to the conversion of the Hindoos, irrespective of caste, has been the *irreligion* which was formerly so *prevalent among the Europeans* settled in the country. Uncontrolled by public opinion; enervated, as well in mind as in body, by the relaxing influence of the climate; urged on by the desire of excessive gains—" *auri sacra fames* "—it is not surprising that the limits of morality were too often transgressed. Until recently, the habits of the ma-

\* Dubois India, p. 422.



jority of Europeans, as far as religion is concerned, were below even those of the heathen by whom they were surrounded. These, at least, paid attention to their own forms and ceremonies, and were on the whole not an immoral race; whilst the former often threw aside all consideration on the subject, and lived as if there were no heaven nor hell, "without God in the world."

The natives, accustomed to indolence and apathy, even in the commission of crime, were astounded at the (to them) dreadful energy which Europeans exhibited in the indulgence of their evil inclinations. In some cases they absolutely regarded them as demons of iniquity, and incarnations of their most terrible deities. The Shanars of Travancore, who are all devil-worshippers, with horrible ceremonies and disgusting dances propitiate the objects of their fear, and continually add to the numbers of their devils.\* In one district an Englishman is said to have been worshipped as such, the offerings on his tomb being spirits and cigars! Can we wonder that the Hindoos were for many years backward in embracing the religion of men whose conduct gave rise to such terrible surmises, such monstrous suspicions?

The Christian again, according to the injunction of our Saviour, prays in secret. The Mahometan, on the contrary, performs his devotions at the appointed time, utterly regardless of the presence of strangers. The Hindoos, who are accustomed to this sight, from

\* See Calcutta Review for Sept. 1851.



rarely if ever seeing a European so engaged, not unnaturally fell into the mistake of supposing that prayer formed no part of his religion. The son of the Nawab of the Carnatic once observed to Schwärtz: "Padree, we always regarded you Europeans as a most irreligious race of men, unacquainted even with the nature of prayer, till you came and told us, that you had good men in Europe; since you came here, indeed, we begin to think better of you."\* Dubois, too, when explaining the virtues inculcated by the Christian religion, was not unfrequently asked, why he did not teach Europeans, who had none of these virtues; and the same question is said to be sometimes put to the clergy and missionaries of the present day.

Thus, laying aside all considerations of caste, it cannot be a matter of surprise, that the natives should have turned a deaf ear to the religion of a people, who, by the immorality of their lives, practically denied the truth of its precepts. Although in matters of opinion far from intolerant,† there is a strong feeling among them, arising possibly from feelings

\* Schwärtz's Memoirs, Vol. i. p. 223; see also p. 195. The habit of neglecting all forms and observances of religion used to be so strong among the Anglo-Indians, that on returning to England they found it difficult to change their conduct. It gave rise to the well-known observation:—"That the English nabobs drop their religion at the Cape as they go to India, and forget to take it up again on their return home." Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 456.

\* Major-Gen. Briggs' Essay read before Asiatic Society, says:—"The people of India are usually liberal in their opinions, and the Hindoos especially are tolerant on the subject of religion."

of exclusiveness, which have their origin in caste, that in the performance of religious duties no latitude is to be allowed. It is not so much the dogmas of any particular sect, as the obedience paid to them, which elicits the highest respect. The pious Hindoos will often bring their simple offerings, indiscriminately to the shrine of a Mussulman or Bramin saint.\* Hence that Europeans should habitually disregard what they profess to follow, especially shocks the native mind. Unlike all previous rulers, Government has abstained from every attempt at influencing either directly or indirectly the faith of the people. "It has been of no religion, and if it has made any distinction, it has been in an indisposition to tolerate the introduction of Christianity."†

In this point of view, the introduction of the episcopal dignity into India, and the erection of schools and churches, has of late done much to advance the cause of Christianity. It has, as it were, visibly shown to the Hindoos, that we have a religion and a Shaster, and that there are those among us who practise the doctrines which we profess.

In our ecclesiastical arrangements, however, there is still much to perplex them. With them the ceremonies of religion are conducted with the utmost splendour. State pageants are dependent upon them, and upon the hospitality shown to Bramins, for a

\* Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 490.

† Campbell's India, p. 208. See also Sir J. Malcolm's Political Hist. of India, p. 472 and 473.

considerable portion of their *éclat*. With us, all is different. In our religion we study the rudest simplicity, whilst in our public levees, durbars, and in all official intercourse with the natives, we ostentatiously affect oriental magnificence.\*

In a region where the pomp and circumstance of state have considerable influence on the sentiments of the people, our missionaries have appeared under the humblest character, and have connected themselves, almost exclusively, with the very dregs of the people. The ignorance and limited capacities of an uneducated rabble, brought up in the grossest superstition, altogether unfits them from comprehending the divine mysteries of the Gospel. Intercourse with these is everywhere, but especially in India, an impediment to obtaining access to the higher members of society. In this respect, it must be allowed, that caste has done much to thwart missionary endeavours. The same, however, would have been the case in any other country. Men ordinarily respect an opinion in proportion to the dignity of those who hold it. "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" was the cautious inquiry of those who had sent to apprehend our Saviour. This feeling, which belongs to all men, is a distinctive feature in the character of the Hindoo. Extreme deference to his superiors forms the most active part of his morality. What

\* *E. g.* The Government allows its servants money for the purpose of defraying the expenses of the presents, &c., necessary on visiting the native courts.

can be more reasonable, then, than that the Gospel should in India first be preached to the educated and respectable; to those whose minds and faculties, by the advantages which riches and rank procure, have been enlarged and cultivated?

If we would learn the description of converts which are made from the lowest castes, hear what Abbé Dubois says of those whom he had himself converted. "During the long period that I have lived in India, in the capacity of missionary, I have made, with the assistance of a native, in all, about three hundred converts of both sexes. Of this number two-thirds were Pariahs or beggars, and the rest were composed of Sudras, vagrants and outcasts of several tribes, who being without resource, turned Christians in order to form new connections, chiefly for the purpose of marriage, or with some other interested views. I am verily ashamed that the resolution which I have taken to declare the whole truth on this subject, forces me to make the humiliating avowal, that those who continued Christians are the very worst among my flock." The reports of the different missionary societies of the present day, give an account of their converts much more encouraging, though in all probability far from being so sternly correct as this of our simple-minded Abbé.

The *want of a society*, into which they may be received, is a great drawback to the conversion of the natives. Here, again, caste stands an antagonist to our missionaries. A convert is necessarily an outcast

from his own class. Hindoos of the higher castes often become Mahometans, with little or no further inconvenience than a Dissenter would experience in becoming a Churchman.\* The reason being, that a convert to El Islam finds a society ready to receive him. This possesses strong religious feelings, and is able and willing to protect him, and resent any insult or annoyance which might be offered to him. Whereas, for Christian converts of the lower orders, there is no English population, with which they can associate.

They exhibit the signs of conversion more often by eating beef and by intoxication, than by excellence of character. They consequently find a *difficulty in obtaining employment*, even from the English, and either from their necessities or inclination are to be seen, with a Bible in one hand, and a petition in the other, wandering through the country, soliciting the alms of Europeans. With these they will be eager to converse on the subject of religion, but will invariably conclude by asking some favour—a testimonial to character, or a recommendation to the district judge, for facilitating the decision of some long-pending suit. Their irregularities and lax morality have, on many occasions, shocked the feelings of even their heathen countrymen.

Their *conduct* again is often so highly *injudicious*, that the English, as a body, give but little encouragement to their dependants becoming Christians. Besides a too common deficiency in moral virtues, many

\* See Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 460.



of them apply their previous ideas of social rank to their new condition. They imagine themselves of the same caste, and in consequence on a footing of equality, with their masters. By most ridiculous attempts at familiarity, they render themselves annoying and contemptible. "I have seen," says a writer on Indian affairs, "a native Christian, not long after his conversion, approach his former master with a familiar smirk, accosting him with 'How do?'" (the only English he had learned), instead of treating him in his usual respectful manner. This sort of conduct is very common among them."\*

From the same idea, that by conversion they become of the same caste as the English, they imagine that there is no longer any obligation on them to work, but that they must be employed as teachers, or in some higher sphere of labour, and by their foolish and affected manners do little credit to the cause they pretend to have embraced.

We are well aware, that these are tidings which may be unpleasant to many a benevolent Christian, who has contributed largely to missionary enterprise. They are probably novel and startling to those who have pictured to themselves a converted Hindoo as all that was meek, and humble, and excellent. Such a one as figures in the pages of missionary pamphlets—at first a heathen foul with every crime, and then a Christian redolent with every virtue. We would not assert that such accounts are untrue, though frequently

\* Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 462.



too highly coloured. There are, doubtless, among the native converts, as large, if not a larger sprinkling of true Christians, than even in countries long subject to Gospel light. The object of missionary publications is to keep alive an interest in the proceedings and success of those who are engaged in propagating Christianity; not to give prominence to those points in which their efforts have partially failed. Our object, on the other hand—an object, as far as it goes, no less beneficial to the interests of our Indian missions—has been to enumerate some of the obstacles which, directly connected with caste or otherwise, have hindered the progress of conversion. Our remarks may have been strong, but they are not in any way intended to condemn the general exertions of our missionaries. These may, in some cases, have been misdirected, but they have always been worthy of the utmost respect. We hold that the propagation of his religion is much more the duty of a Christian, than the majority suppose. We look forward to the day when that duty shall be more plainly acknowledged. We should hail with delight any measure which would make the support of missions, not the voluntary act of a portion of its members, but (as it ought to be) a duty incumbent upon the whole church—an expense to be defrayed from her own revenues.

We have remarked above, that our missionaries, from associating too much with the lowest castes, generally learn to speak the native languages vulgarly, and write them inelegantly. When they have

attained a certain facility in expressing their thoughts, it is too often their custom to set about translating portions of the Bible, or some other religious work, into the barbarous dialect which they have acquired. They thus bring as much contempt upon their religion as if a Chinese, eager to give intelligent Englishmen an idea of his religious belief, should translate the works of Confucius into the broadest dialect of Somerset or Yorkshire.

Yet such has been too much the case with our Eastern missionaries. Although the Oriental languages are totally different in style, structure, and allusions from those of Europe, and require the most unremitting application before the student can gain a familiar acquaintance with them ; yet it has repeatedly happened that missionaries, after a study of a few years, have sent forth translations of the Scriptures. Rhenius declares that he began to edit a new edition of the Tamul Bible before he had been in Madras *one year and a half!* Other\* missionaries have confessed to a similar folly, and warned their successors against it.

Such hasty and imperfect works, undertaken before they have acquired a competent knowledge of the language in which they wrote, have been either simply useless, or, from explaining the doctrines of our faith by ridiculous forms of expression, have been absolutely pernicious.

After a few years' application,† the missionaries of Serampore announced that they had translated the

\* *E. g.* Dr. Carey.

† Quarterly Review for Dec. 1825.

Scriptures into *twenty-seven different languages*. The consequences of this haste were such as might have been expected. The versions abounded with glaring mistakes. By mis-spelling, and mis-employing words and phrases, the sense of the original was sometimes completely lost, and the meaning ludicrous and absurd. Of this kind, the reader may find several instances in Abbé Dubois' works on India.

The *methods* by which missionaries endeavour to *attract attention* have frequently operated to the injury of their cause among a people who are, perhaps, more alive to their absurdity than even Europeans. Judson, for instance, commenced his missionary labours at Rangoon, in Burmah, by constructing on the side of the road leading to the grand pagoda, a little hut of bamboo and thatch, without doors, windows, or partitions.\* Here, as his wife relates, he used to sit all the day long, and say to the passers by, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without price." What could be more ill-judged, not to say absurd, than this? How could the passers by, by any human possibility, have the least comprehension of this beautiful metaphor? Taking it in its literal sense, the only one in which they could take it, can we blame the Burmese for laughing in his face, and considering him, *primâ facie*, either a fool or a madman? Missionaries will, of

\* Mrs. Judson's account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman empire.

course, reply, that such conduct is but in unison with that of the preachers and prophets of olden times, who thus veiled their meaning in parable and allegory. Undoubtedly they did. But they spoke intelligibly in the vernacular tongue : they were not strangers, mangling and stuttering forth a foreign language. They used national images ; they referred to national customs ; they explained, in an easy and familiar manner, the meaning and drift of their remarks. Such a method, as we have described, of exciting interest by employing expressions, startling and paradoxical, has been too much the fashion in our Indian missions.

Can it be astonishing that Christianity, by these means, made but little progress among a refined people, possessing so keen an appreciation of the ridiculous, that their oldest and favourite authors are those who have indulged in satire.

But to return to our subject. After allowing for the operation of the numerous obstacles to conversion which we have mentioned, it will still appear that caste is, to a certain extent, an impediment to the spread of Christianity. Many persons might think that its opposition is insurmountable.

We are not, however, the first who have attempted to modify it, nor the only persons who have preached universal toleration in India.\* The Sikhs, under their founder, Nanik Baba, absolutely abolished caste.

\* At the temple of Juggernaut, and the district around, there is universal peace. The distinction of castes and sects ceases.—Abbé Dubois' India, p. 418.

They allowed of all religious opinions, so far as they did not offend the prejudices of others. Whilst on the one hand they forbade idolatrous processions to Hindoo deities; on the other hand, the killing of cattle was prohibited, and no muezzin from the lofty minaret summoned the faithful to prayers. Mahometan or Hindoo, Bramin or Sudra, Buddhist or Jain, all became his converts, and the Sikhs soon rose to be a sect, so powerful and numerous, that under their martial leader, Guru Govind, they gained, at the death of Aurangzib, a country and a standing in India. Caste has of late been gradually reappearing among them, but without in any way affecting the order of things established by Nanik. What greater obstacles, we would ask, are presented by caste to the diffusion of Christianity than it presented to the regulations of Nanik—regulations by which it was itself annihilated? \* Why similarly should not its success be equal to that which his system experienced?

We will, in the *second place*, proceed to examine *whether caste does not in some respects pave the way for Christianity.*

Whatever *morality* has been *fostered by caste*, will all *assist the missionary.* That the morality resulting from this cause, is in many cases of a very high character, we have already observed. In the domestic circle it has fostered many virtues, which will, doubtless, pave the way for the reception of the Gospel. † Among the Rajpoots especially, there are traits of

\* See Elphinstone, p. 601. † See Col. Tod's Rajasthan, passim.



noble sentiments, which we are apt to imagine peculiar to Christianity. Their high feelings of honour, their strong attachment to truth, their love of their country, their childish simplicity in the arts of life, their disregard for self and personal advantage, but, above all, the freedom allowed to their women, who are, comparatively, well educated, and are remarkable for their chastity, the respect paid to them, and the affection exhibited by every one to his family and kindred. These are a collection of virtues but rarely found in a heathen, and do, we conceive, dispose them to the reception of Gospel truths.

*Caste no longer directly hinders conversion.* The horrors of being an outcast, which were never such as they have been portrayed by Southey, in the "Curse of Kehama," have of late greatly diminished. Bodies of native Christians are growing up, to which every fresh convert can immediately attach himself, and avoid any trifling disadvantage which might arise from being an outcast.

When considerable societies shall thus have been formed throughout the peninsula, our religion will, as it is already doing, take its place among the numerous creeds which are everywhere prevalent. Its diffusion and popularity will then, in nearly every case, depend upon its own merits, and the energy of its preachers, assisted by the Divine blessing. Caste will present no more opposition to its spread, than it has done to the numberless other religions which exist in India.

There is at present in India a spirit of inquiry, and



an eagerness for European learning, which will immensely forward the cause of Christianity. Our Government, but above all, our missionaries, have fostered this spirit by a *grand system of education*. By this, more than by any other measure, they will sap the foundations of caste, and diffuse Christianity.

We will not encumber our pages with a mass of figures and dry data : suffice it to say, that wherever there are missionary stations, there day - schools, boarding-schools, and schools for females are almost invariably found. The course of instruction is, for the most part, secular, consisting of reading, writing, and the elements of general knowledge. All attempts at conversion are studiously declaimed, though the Scriptures form the class-book for the purpose of reading. So high is the opinion in which their character and precepts are held by the Hindoos, that the schools of our missionaries are, for this very reason, better attended than those of Government, in which the Kuran is often a text-book. So extraordinary is the desire for knowledge now prevalent, and so singular the admiration for the Bible, that when certain Hindoos in Jaffa\* established a school in opposition to that of the missionaries, they were compelled to introduce the Bible, to prevent their establishment from being absolutely deserted.

The *conversion of the Hindoos* is, it is true, *by no means rapid*; but this can hardly be regretted, if it is at

\* See Calcutta Review for September 1851, p. 262. Also, Campbell's Government of India, p. 209.

the same time sure. Like Baber, when he invaded their country, the people have hesitated long; but when opinion is ripe they will doubtless "put their foot in the stirrup of resolution," and a conversion, wide-spread and genuine, may be the result.

It is their character to be greatly swayed by the examples of persons of high rank and power. Hitherto the only Christians of this class have been Europeans. Suppose, however, that some of the native princes were to turn Christians, who shall say what might be the effect? We have had, perhaps, no experience of such an event; but acquaintance with the peculiar genius of the nation renders us sanguine for the result. The natives may possibly, even now, be only waiting for some influential Rajah, some Hindoo Constantine, to arise and embrace Christianity. The great and the powerful may then come over; and when the chief men of each class have deserted Hindooism, we have reason to suppose that the rest of their respective castes will hasten to join their ranks. In this particular, *caste* may have no unimportant effect in *accelerating* the conversion of the whole people.

Not only Mussulmans, but even Bramins, stand by with perfect coolness, and listen with apparent pleasure to scholars reading the stories of the creation, and of the miracles of our Saviour. A more favourable opinion of Europeans is said to have arisen in the minds of the natives, who have by means of our schools become acquainted with some of the leading

features of our religion. The idea, that we had neither "Shaster nor caste," *i. e.*, neither Bible nor religious community, is rapidly wearing away. There are everywhere found intelligent Hindoos, who appear to take a pleasure in comparing our Scriptures with their own sacred works. For the results of a searching comparison no Christian need fear.

*Before education prejudices are everywhere giving way.* The seclusion of females is becoming less strict. Those among the lower classes eagerly attend our schools, receiving instruction with the greatest avidity. The daughters of numerous families of the higher ranks are taught in private.\* In visiting or receiving the visits of a native one can now inquire without offence after the welfare of the *zenana*.

Even the remarriage of widows is discussed by the native papers, and its advantages fully acknowledged. A numerous body is coming forward in society, possessing notions far more enlightened than those of their fathers; a body of men who put but little faith in the Shasters, and look upon the old pundits and teachers as ignorant bigots. In the case of medical pupils, many prejudices, which but recently were supposed insurmountable, have been already overcome. On every side they are falling and tottering. Educa-

\* This is the more wonderful, when we consider that under the ancient *régime*, the immodest girls employed in the worship of idols, and other prostitutes, were the only persons taught to read. It was thought the mark of an irregular education, if a modest woman were found capable of reading. She herself would have concealed it out of shame. Abbé Dubois' *India*, p. 217.

tion of any sort would produce this effect; combined with religious instruction, its influence is doubled. Caste as well as other superstitions will either vanish, or be gradually modified. Even at this present moment, in the south of India, so long its strongest hold, Hindoo boys and young men reside on the premises of the missionaries, and eat food there without losing caste.\*

There is another point, in which the institutions of caste may be supposed to have operated favourably for the success of our missionaries. Among the generality of heathens, immense reverence is attached to those by whom the public worship and the ceremonies of religion are regulated. Although the main object of the Code of Menu is to confirm and increase the power of the Bramins, this method of gaining them consideration has, for some reason which it would be impossible to fathom, been neglected.† They are not absolutely forbidden to sacrifice, or to perform the duties peculiar to priests, but they derive no dignity from their service at the temples. In fact the performance of this, as a regular profession, is considered degrading. At the present day necessity has driven very many of them to this, as a means of livelihood, but the original feeling in regard to it still subsists in full force. The *grand mission of the Bramins*, their most honourable employment, is *teaching*. The labours of our missionaries have unwittingly been un-

\* See Calcutta Review, for Sept. 1851.

† See Elphinstone, p. 13.

dertaken in exact coincidence with popular ideas on this subject. The grand scheme of education, which they are developing, is supplanting the lifeless and effete lectures of Bramins, who have fallen far behind the spirit of the age. The natives view with pleasure their noble efforts. They recognize in them the Bramins of the tenth Avatar; that last Avatar which is soon to come, and in which caste itself shall be extinct. Our present method of propagating Christianity has, in this point, so completely fallen in with their previous habits of thought, that the salute which is paid to the Bramins, not that salute which is due to the priest, is considered the proper expression of respect to a missionary.

*The Bramins are no longer so highly honoured.* The clever Sudras thrust them aside from place and power without scruple. By far the greater increase in wealth and wisdom, has been diffused among these. As the people advance in knowledge and enlightenment, the influence of the Bramins, whose interest it is to keep them in ignorance, must of necessity fail. The Sudras, who form the majority of Hindoos, when they begin to weigh the respective merits of their own religion and Christianity, will discover how clouded are their spiritual prospects—how little Menu has done for them. Whilst, on the other hand, our Bible gives them many special invitations, and opens out glorious advantages beyond the grave. Is it then unreasonable to suppose, that they will, without much hesitation, desert a creed, in which they are considered on a par



with animals, and embrace one in which they would in many particulars be placed on a level with kings and priests?

The effect of the Bramins having for so long a period monopolized the learning of the country, and studiously concealed it from the masses, will be to produce some grand climax, when the power of the press, and a more general diffusion of knowledge, has opened the eyes of the many, to the unreasonableness of their pretensions. Such a climax would, in general, be accompanied by the most violent outrages. These, however, the power fularm of our Government will probably be able to repress. The Bramin, as is already partially the case, will take his position in society as a man of some consideration, not on account of his caste, but in consequence of his polished manners and ready address. He will probably become, what he already is in the Cuttack, and in some other parts of India, in which the Bramins have applied themselves to agriculture and commerce, a respectable farmer or merchant.\*

Of such as have already engaged in the ordinary pursuits of life it has been remarked, that "their moral and intellectual worth seems to rise exactly in proportion to their emancipation from those shackles of prejudice and superstition, which narrow the minds and debase the natures of the higher and orthodox class."

Nay, he may even himself profess Christianity, and when the sentiments of the majority of the people

\* Asiatic Transactions, Vol. xv. p. 198.



have become favourable to its introduction, an order of Government may transfer to the use of the Christian ministry, the funds and lands which now support the Bramins, or are devoted to the service of temples, or the expenses of their processions of Shiva, Juggernaut, or Kali. It was thus that the Emperor Gratian applied to the service of the Church, the revenues of the Pagan priests and vestals.\* It was thus that Theodosius, throughout the whole of the Roman Empire, confiscated the consecrated property of heathenism for the benefit of Christianity.

The Bramin may possibly be found among the ranks of the priesthood. He may throw aside the *poita*, to assume the surplice ; and, as a minister of the Gospel, may still receive the respect of the people. The *dandwut*, or Braminical salute, with which the natives are even now not backward in greeting our missionaries, may be permanently transferred from the Bramin to the Christian clergyman.

The *relaxed state of Hinduism and caste*, consequent upon such a change in the sentiments of the people, *will*, doubtless, as is already in some places the case, *produce a laxity of morals*, which may be regretted, but can hardly be avoided. Caste is, as we have said, in a great measure the character of the Hindoo. When this is removed, for the more unthinking part of the people, one of the great inducements to moral conduct will be destroyed ; and it will be some time before they gain a character, in our European idea of the

\* Gibbon's Decline and Fall, Chap. xxviii.

word. The introduction of new springs of action, and a change in habits and associations, has always been found to let loose the evil inclinations of the inconsiderate multitude, who embrace a new creed from interested motives, and believe without conviction. The loosening of moral ties is an evil attendant upon all revolutions, but especially upon those in religion.

The fact of *caste over-burdening the people with ceremonies, may negatively tend to the introduction of Christianity*.<sup>\*</sup> Its regulations are so numerous, so minute, and extend to so many actions of a man's life, that even those attentive to their dictates, will find themselves almost constantly in a state of impurity, and their caste forfeited. The Hindoos themselves, practically neglect the greater part of them. The women, however, of the upper classes, shut up, as they are, in the *zenana*, with little or nothing to beguile their time, make it their chief business to think upon and practise this heap of superstitions. This, when a spirit of inquiry has been set abroad by means of the press, and the enlightening influence of education, will occasion, we fancy, the rapid progress of Christianity. The eyes of the natives will be suddenly opened to the full absurdity and obscenity of their religious ceremonies. When once their implicit faith in these has

<sup>\*</sup> Let any one who doubts this read the 4th chapter of the Code of Menu, "on Economics," and the 3rd, "on Diet;" and Kurma Lochma, a Sanscrit work on domestic duties. See Hope's Letters on India, p. 327.

been shaken, we anticipate, that like most changes in the religion or sentiments of a nation, the action will be sudden and overpowering. Though it may not completely destroy caste, yet it will probably annihilate its opposition to Christianity, and in its violent course carry off many similar abuses.

Other more minute circumstances, in which caste has reference to the conversion of India, we might enumerate, but sufficient has been said, to indicate its general effect, viz., that though in many points it may be highly antagonistic to Christianity, yet in some cases, its influence may be even favourable to its diffusion.

## CHAPTER VI.

EFFECTS OF CASTE ON THE PROBABLE DESTINIES  
OF OUR INDIAN EMPIRE.

“For what purpose has the great continent of India, with its vast resources and countless population, been placed under the rule of a small island in the western world?”—*Calcutta Review*.

THE empire of British India stands alone in the history of the globe. Our conquests, as rapid as they have been illustrious, have placed us in the possession of a dominion, of which no other country can offer an example. Hence we have no precedent to guide us in governing it. There has been no other nation similarly situated, and the page of history is in vain consulted to divine its destiny. Much of it, like the nations which came under the Roman power, has come into our possession, more through the divisions and quarrels of the native princes, and the force of political circumstances, than owing to any thirst of ours for dominion. “Augendæ dominationi causam atque materiam præbuit potius inconsulta hostium atque æmulorum pravitas quam illius ambitio,” gives as true

a picture of the means by which we acquired India, as it does of the rise of the Roman empire.\*

But here the resemblance ceases. Rome, the mistress of the then known world, was situated in the very centre of her subjects, who were nations of every language and family, possessing not one single bond of union, neither of race, religion, or policy. In the case of India, however, a company of Englishmen, who have but lately ceased to be merchants, and are themselves subject to the control of their own monarch, govern on this side of the globe, a compact mass of 120 millions of human beings, situated almost at the Antipodes. It is true that these are divided into different languages and nations, but the majority have many feelings in common: all, for the most part, have the same religion, and probably all, without exception, in one form or other, pay strict obedience to the obligations of caste.† The Roman, too, by his colonies and his military occupation of the country, more as an agriculturist than a conqueror, became a denizen of the soil; “where the Roman conquered he inhabited.”‡ Every subject state was full of citizens, devotedly attached, as well by policy as by patriotism, to the rule of the central power, and ready for the

\* This is more or less true of the whole of the peninsula, even of that part which was secured to us by the victories of Clive. Mysore, the Mahratta territory, Scinde, the country of the Sikhs, &c., are notorious instances.

† Considering Buddhism and Braminism kindred religions, which is pretty nearly the case.

‡ Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Chap. ii.

sake of interest, as well as bound by the tenure by which they held their property, to rise in its defence.

In India our institutions have been of a different character. For many years it was the policy of the Company to exclude Europeans, and even their own servants, from permanently settling in the country. In many states at this moment, there is scarcely a single Englishman resident. We have been in India essentially a migratory people. Our rule is upheld more by the judicious application of our revenue, the strong arm of force, and a prevalent idea of our invincibility, than by other constitutional methods. In national governments a great crisis may occur, which is marked by the historian as one of danger; in India every event is a crisis. A few men killed by decoits require a company of troops to be sent; if they are defeated, a battalion must be despatched; if that be not sufficient, an army must at once be marched to the spot. We cannot retreat. It is the law of our existence as rulers of that empire, that we must not yield or give up a single point. Such is our condition, that not only the honour, but the power of the nation, is to be vindicated: the occasion of a small reverse has been known to vibrate through India for twenty years.\*

How are we to determine the probable effects of caste on a state of things like this? The effects of an

\* Speech of General Sir John Malcolm in the Court of Directors, 1833.



institution which has scarcely had a parallel in any nation, upon a government dissimilar from any which can be found in the page of history.

Its effects upon the different governments of Indostan which preceded that of the English, have, as far as can be learned, never been either very marked, or at all direct. What Paley has observed concerning the influence of Christianity upon politics is so descriptive of that of caste upon the institutions of India, that we cannot refrain from quoting his remarks:—"Its influence," says he, "is not to be sought for in the councils of princes, in the debates or resolutions of popular assemblies, in the conduct of governments towards their subjects, or of states and sovereigns towards one another; of conquerors at the head of their armies, or of parties intriguing for power at home (topics which alone almost occupy the attention, and fill the pages of history); but must be perceived, if perceived at all, in the silent course of private and domestic life. Hence, it operates most upon those of whom history knows least; upon fathers and mothers in their families; upon men-servants and maid-servants; upon the orderly tradesman, the quiet villager. Amongst such, its influence collectively may be inestimable; yet its effects, in the mean time, little upon those who figure upon the stage of the world. It cannot, therefore, be thought strange, that this influence should elude the grasp and touch of public history; for what is public history but a register of the successes and disappointments, the vices, the follies

and the quarrels of those who engage in contentions for power?" \*

Such is an exact picture of the way in which caste, so little noticed by historians, has influenced, and may yet influence the destinies of India.

We will take it for granted, that whatever be the revolutions to which Indostan may be subject, Europeans will be the lords paramount, and Japhet will still dwell, as he ever has dwelt, in the tents of Shem. How many ages will elapse before the British shall cease to be the dominant people, it is impossible to form even a conjecture. Some will tell us that the prudence of our legislation, and the vigour of our policy, have left us little cause to fear for the stability of our empire; others, again, represent it as a vast pyramid, poised upon its apex; its equilibrium might be destroyed by the slightest movement. They tell us, that the overthrow, nay, the very annihilation, not merely of European rule, but of the resident Europeans themselves, hangs over our head, suspended, like the sword of Damocles, by a single thread. If, however, Britain be herself secure—if the sword and the purse be, for the future, as judiciously employed as they have been in times past—if the valour of our armies shall only be equalled by the generous use which is made of their victories—if our policy ever be, "*parcere devictis, et debellare superbos*"—if, by preserving peace and prosperity, we render the natives interested in our rule—if, by carefully avoiding every

\* Evidences of Christianity, Vol. i. p. 432.

measure which may shock their prejudices or arouse their superstitious feelings, we avert religious insurrections—a long period may safely be assigned to our dominion in the East.

The question of the right by which we hold so many countries under our sway matters but little. Our dominion is primarily founded upon our might. We can safely affirm that, whatever else it might be, it was not thirst for conquest, or for empty glory, which made us masters of India. For those who might advocate our relinquishing that country, it is only necessary to consider what would be the awful results of such a step, not to our own country, but to the natives themselves. The great plain of India is fruitful, and covered with populous and opulent cities. Its is surrounded with nations as robust and warlike as its own inhabitants are cowardly, feeble, and inert. If the English were to desert them, these would descend upon the prey in wild confusion. The Sikhs from the Punjab, the Nepaulese from the Himalays, the Mahrattas from the South, and the Burmans from the East, would each carve for himself an empire out of our possessions. Like the horse in the fable, the Hindoos are incapable of putting forth their best speed in the race of civilization, without the assistance of the rider to animate their exertions and direct their course. There cannot be a question, but that the progress of their civilization will be greater in our hands, than in those of the barbarians who surround them.

In every part of India, however, there are individuals who bear our yoke with impatience, and would willingly join in any well-organized scheme for recovering their independence. The Nizam and the King of Oude would be only too glad to free themselves from the thralldom of our political residents. He of the Golden Slipper, the Emperor of Burmah, has already done so, and is again trying a fall with our Eastern power. Almost every native prince, and multitudes of Mahometans, have a latent feeling of disaffection. It is not many years since there was discovered in the petty fortress of an Indian prince ammunition sufficient for a considerable army. The Rajah Nawab, of Berhampore, treated with regal state at Calcutta, committed suicide rather than be amenable to the English law. The number, however, of those who thus impatiently endure our sway, is daily diminishing. Time is wearing away old-rooted antipathies, those of colour, of religion, and of caste. The enlightened policy and the gigantic strength of the Company are beginning to be seen. The Sikhs are already settling down into a peaceful nation. The Hindoos of Scinde bless the issue of the sanguinary struggle at Meeanee, which broke for ever the power of their tyrants, the Ameers, and their myrmidons, the Beloochees.\*

Independently, however, of these considerations, where shall we find in the page of history one example of a people, permanently conquered by a braver and more

\* MacFarlane, Vol. ii. p. 407.

civilized race than themselves, regaining their liberty and independence, and expelling their conquerors. Of Europeans, again, who is there to dispossess the Anglo-Saxon race? We are masters of the Indian Ocean. We hold nearly every point of commercial and political importance throughout the Eastern archipelago. In those seas we need fear no rival. We are masters of the Khyber Pass, and other entrances to India from the north; between us and the Russian frontier, lies a journey of at least three months,\* through a country almost impassable, so that an invasion through the Himalays, reports of which were at one time so rife, is but a wild chimera.

*Our* institutions, then, will probably become those of India, as far as their introduction is practicable. Of them a popular form of government, the representative system, is a leading feature. Whether there will ever be found materials in India for such a constitution, time only can unfold. Popular government appears to be an idea peculiar to the Japhetic race. The Asiatics seem always to have preferred despotism. Caste, by the mutual jealousies and indifference which it excites, will doubtless for a long time frustrate the attempts at coalition, which a representative system presupposes.

Possibly for each caste or tribe representatives might now be chosen, and give expression to the feelings of the people, as true and as genuine as mem-

\* Between Khiva or Balk and the Himalays. Pamphlet on Russian invasion.



bers of our own parliament now do to the opinions of the majority of their constituents. But many of the castes are so divided, both in place of residence and points of common interest, as well as so unimportant, that no system of this description could be of universal application. When, however, the sharp points of caste have been rubbed down, and the particulars in which its effects are practically injurious have been abolished, then its reliques may merely stand to preserve some grades in society which are necessary to its well-being, but present no obstacles to political freedom.

Among the ancient Egyptians—a nation whose customs in many points bore a resemblance to those of the Hindoos—caste endured unscathed the invasion of the Persians, a people unaccustomed to a liberal form of government. Before the free and enlightened institutions of the Grecian conquerors it fell for ever. Such will, doubtless, be the case in India. Caste has survived every previous invasion of the country, and even imbued the invaders with its spirit. These, however, like the Persians of old, were but the minions of an Oriental despot. Far different is the character of its present lords. Under a government liberal and enlightened as ours, the progression of an intelligent people, such as the Hindoos, must necessarily be towards civilization and Christianity.

The effects of caste upon the future institutions of India may, in some respects, be not dissimilar to those of feudalism upon the frame of society in Europe. In fact, in Behar, Malwa, Guzerat, and some



other parts of the peninsula, caste bears more the character of feudalism than its own peculiar features.\* It will, doubtless, be an institution, whose modification will be the constant aim of Indian statesmen. It will be a something whose traditions and whose memorials will give a steadiness to society, which may do much to counteract the indifference of the Hindoos to those feelings, which in other countries are the distinctives of patriotism.

Caste has performed its office in the civilization of India, and saved that country from a long age of barbarism. "Necessity," it is true, "is the mother of invention;" but it is no less so, that her offspring will never come to maturity, unless she have strength and leisure to rear it. In India as in Egypt caste was its nursing mother. Many a useful discovery, which in other countries would have been lost to society, for want of time to record and consolidate them, it has preserved and handed down to posterity. The press, which for many years back has performed this office in the West, is already beginning to be felt in the East: caste is, then, no longer of necessity to the existence of the arts. Its practical utility is gone. It will, doubtless, for many years hence, exist among the prejudiced and bigoted; but it will have little influence on affairs of moment or importance. One after another, its regulations will be so habitually broken that they will vanish; every infringement will pave the way for

\* See Asiatic Researches, Vol. xv. p. 219; and Sir J. Malcolm's Report of Malwa, p. 375.

others; the progress of civilization will prevent any new rules from being received; and caste in time will quietly expire. In fact, even now the flame of superstition is beginning to burn low; and it is the opinion of Hindoos well acquainted with the subject, that were caste to be enforced in all its strictness, there would be few families which would be wholly safe.\*

The institutions of India must necessarily be of a complicated nature, and affected by influences the causes of which are often so distant and minute, as to entirely escape notice. Of these, caste is one whose effects may be most powerful, and yet the cause be so involved with others, as to be incapable of separation. If the question were merely the civilization of a people who had no institutions of their own, it could very easily be solved. The Company have not had a block of marble to shape into any figure they pleased; but a ready-formed image, badly sculptured, to mould and polish with the consent of hosts of jealous guardians, so as to attain a high degree of beauty. They have found, and they will find, marks and indentations which, according to European notions, may be out of character, and the causes for which they cannot divine. These will affect their workmanship, and in many instances, perhaps, disfigure it. Caste will be one of these; but where or how its effects will be most plainly discerned it were difficult to say.

As yet, among other causes, it has in many parts

\* Heber's Letters on India. Heber often speaks of caste weighing less on men's minds than it used to do. See Vol. i. p. 337.

of India tended to keep the land divided into small farms, so that the same ryot is both labourer, farmer, and landlord. Whether this altogether spring from caste, or was partly caused by our destroying so many of the *zemindars* and *polygars*,\* who, under the Mogul government, did not differ much from the great English landlords, has hardly been determined. If we refer it, as we did the village system, to the former cause, how will it affect the future welfare of India? Under the lawless powers who held the great plain of Indostan, before the rule of the British, we have seen how much this system secured an amount of individual liberty, which would otherwise have been lost. Under the English Government and English laws they can have no such power. Our stern, unwavering rule secures them as much personal freedom as is consistent with the common weal; but it admits of no power besides its own. Before its own courts, and not to the village *chubootra*, to be tried by a partial *punchayet*†—a jury, perhaps, often as guilty as the offender—must a criminal now ultimately be brought. The political and judicial power of the village system is for the most part gone; there remain, however, its minute divisions and subdivisions of property, which we are

\* These were tributary Hindoo chiefs, by whose agency the Mogul sovereigns collected their tributes, and exercised an indirect authority over those parts of their empire which were never thoroughly subdued.

† This is a jury or court of arbitrators chosen by the parties to try the case. We still allow of its decisions in cases involving questions of the custom of the country, or the caste, &c.

afraid will long have the effect of preventing the employment of any large amount of capital, and of keeping it in minute quantities, spread about the country, and in this way will materially hinder the improvement and prosperity of India.

Possibly the abolition of the Mahometan law of succession, and the introduction of a law of partial entail, might do much to obviate the disadvantages arising from these circumstances; but as long as we find, as we do find, the system of caste so strong, that even the rights of ownership and property are neglected in obedience to its dictates, we must expect to see the ryot what he is—a poor embarrassed landowner—and the resources of the country undeveloped for want of capital.

Our Government have of late done much to obviate this evil. The bitter reproach of Burke, that we had constructed in India no public works of utility—that if we were to desert the country to-morrow, we should leave no more traces of our dominion than the ourang-outang, or the tiger—is no longer true. The stately monuments of the Mahometan rule may sometimes surpass our Government works in splendour, but in utility they admit of no contrast. We found canals, originally formed for the purposes of traffic or irrigation, fallen into disrepair and useless.\* We have rendered most of them efficient, have formed others, and projected still more. What is far more important, we have introduced into India *steam*, that grand agent of

\* Campbell's India, p. 30.

modern civilization. Engines, stationary and locomotive, are everywhere growing into use. Steamboats ply on its principal rivers, and in defiance of the monsoons, at every season of the year, waft its traffic to foreign climes. To preserve and increase internal intercourse, a grand network of railways has been projected by Government, and portions of it already completed. These are objects which will civilize the natives, and promote the prosperity of the country, in defiance of deep-rooted prejudices. Before irresistible agents like these, we may expect the absurdities and inconveniences of caste, if not to vanish, at any rate quietly to succumb.

The new policy of appointing natives as *moonsiffs*, or inferior judges, and in some instances subjecting even Europeans to their jurisdiction, may (especially if such appointments be given as a reward for distinction in our schools) have a considerable influence on caste. Natives will pride themselves on other matters than the rank which has been awarded to them by Menu. At our government schools, they often attain great proficiency in science ; but the early age at which they marry, and the want of any further objects of emulation, in general cause them to relinquish their studies, and rapidly degenerate. This, however, will not be the case, if numerous lucrative appointments are proposed for their ambition. The habit of despising the natives, too common among the old civilians, will give way to respect for their attainments. When they are no longer treated with contempt, we may



expect that they will be eager to render themselves worthy of our good opinion, and emancipate themselves from prejudice and superstition.

With regard to the *future religion of India*, we have already noticed, at length, many particulars in which caste hinders, as well as several in which it may be supposed materially to forward, the introduction of Christianity. We assume, and we think rightly, that our religion is making its way into the hearts of the people of India, and that it will ultimately prevail, to the exclusion both of Mahometanism and Hinduism.

We are inclined to hope that the period is not long distant, which will solve the question of the effects of caste upon the conversion of the people. Already a spirit of inquiry, fanned by more frequent intercourse with Europeans, and the uncontrollable influence of the press, has gone forth. Already there have been "great searchings of heart." Several, even farmers and others, who live at a considerable distance from any English station, have spontaneously visited the clergy and missionaries for the purpose of asking questions concerning our faith. The idol car of Shiva is moved with greater difficulty by his lukewarm worshippers. In the loamy lanes of southern India it is no unfrequent thing for the car of Indra to be besloughed, and for the collector to issue an order for its removal, before the indifferent villagers of Tanjore will take measures for dragging it home again to its sanctuary.\* Self-immolation is becoming less common.

\* Jesuit in India, by Father Strickland.



Slavery, infanticide, and suttees, have been abolished by law, and their abolition has been readily acquiesced in by the better part of the natives themselves.

Some of the Bramins and pundits, with the intelligent Ram Mohun Roy, have embraced Christianity. Political circumstances have led to many of the Rajahs being brought up in the families of English gentlemen, where they have almost invariably imbibed the highest respect for our religion, as well as affection for their guardians. Such men will naturally have lost many of their prejudices, whilst they have formed a more correct idea of our institutions than the generality of their countrymen; and will, doubtless, be often ready to join our ranks, and assist by their example our missionary efforts.

In addition to which, men who have mixed long with the natives in the more remote parts of India, and are well acquainted with their sentiments, have asserted that a very general feeling now exists, that some great crisis in their religious polity is at hand, and that Hinduism will be supplanted by Christianity. As is usual in such cases, old prophecies are raked up, to become pregnant with meaning.

At Benares there stood a pillar, which was a beautiful shaft of one stone, forty feet high, covered with the most exquisite carving, and dedicated to the god Shiva. A tradition concerning it had long been current among the people, that it was formerly twice as high; was gradually sinking into the ground; and when its summit should be level with the earth, all

nations were to be of one caste, and the religion of Brahma to have an end. During a disturbance, a description of which we have previously given, which happened at Benares a few years before Heber's visit, between the Hindoos and Mahometans, during which the former had thrown slaughtered hogs into the mosques, and the latter had polluted the Hindoo temples, and especially a well of peculiar sanctity, by smearing them with cows' blood; this identical pillar was thrown down. The occurrence, connected with the excited state of the public mind, and the atrocities which had been committed, was universally regarded as an omen fatal to Hinduism. Again, there is a prophecy that the sanctity of Hurdwar will cease in about forty years from the present time, when pilgrimages will no longer be performed thither. In all parts, too, of India there are various traditions and prophecies current among the people, all indicating a time when the Brahminical creed shall be laid aside, and all nations be of one caste.\*

In conclusion, we must again call attention to the magnitude of our Indian empire, the variety of tribes and nations which possess it, and the diversity of their habits and opinions. That though caste in one form or other exists throughout the whole Peninsula, yet it is everywhere modified by particular customs and regulations. Our observations then have, as far as possible, been general, and have had reference, not so much to the particular regulations of caste, as to its general

\* Shore's India, Vol. ii. p. 468.

spirit. This, there can be no doubt, is gradually losing its influence. Although it may on the whole have been productive of more evil than good, its abolition, to be beneficial, must take place, as probably will be the case, gradually. Otherwise one check upon morals and the disorganization of society would be removed, before another was imposed.

It will die away by degrees, as the people become better educated and more enlightened. The institution of schools on a liberal plan for the benefit of the rising generation in the *upper*, as well as the lower ranks of life, will do more, probably, to removing the prejudices of the natives, in regard to caste and religion, than direct attempts at conversion.

When a greater diffusion of general knowledge shall have taken place—"when they cease to consider Mount Meru as twenty thousand miles high, and the world as a flower, of which India is the cup, and other countries the leaves—their minds may become more open to rational views on the subject of religion." When they shall cease to believe that the principal town of Lanca, or Ceylon, is surrounded by a wall of pure gold, and contains palaces of peerless magnitude—when their terrible dread of the *Kala panee*, or black, black sea, shall give way to more rational ideas—when they shall no longer so implicitly believe that for three parts of every day the Almighty is seated personally, though invisibly, on the rock of Chunar—then we may expect to see the absurdities of their polytheism to vanish. But whether

caste, which is so intimately connected with them, will be a partaker of their downfall, or will survive, though in a modified form — whether its effects on the institutions of India will gradually become less distinct, and its influence so indirect as to be inappreciable—or whether, which we are inclined to suppose will be the result, after Christianity has supplanted all these, its regulations will still continue in force, and defy the efforts of moralists and politicians for their suppression, we leave to the hand of Time to unfold.

In contemplating that vast empire, won by the most undaunted valour and the most consummate skill, it is impossible not to glow with exultation at the glorious prospect which its acquisition has opened to Great Britain. It presents a field in which, under Providence, the happiness of nearly one-eighth of the whole human race depends upon our exertions. To gain an acquaintance, then, with the character and condition of the people of India, can be no unprofitable study for Englishmen; especially at the present moment, when the revision of the Charter of the East India Company again puts it in our power to legislate for their welfare.

Indian affairs are but imperfectly understood in England. Few find leisure, and still fewer have inclination or opportunity, to dive into intricate questions about Nizams and Dewans, about Ryots and Tehsildars, about Adauluts and Punchayets. We are but partially acquainted with those various circumstances and contingencies, those recondite sources of

influence, which uphold that opinion of interest and power in the native mind, which is the ultimate foundation of all our authority and legislation.

Consider the solemnity which this question demands, and the important position which caste occupies in its investigation, and any, even the slightest contribution to our knowledge of its bearings, should not be altogether devoid of interest.

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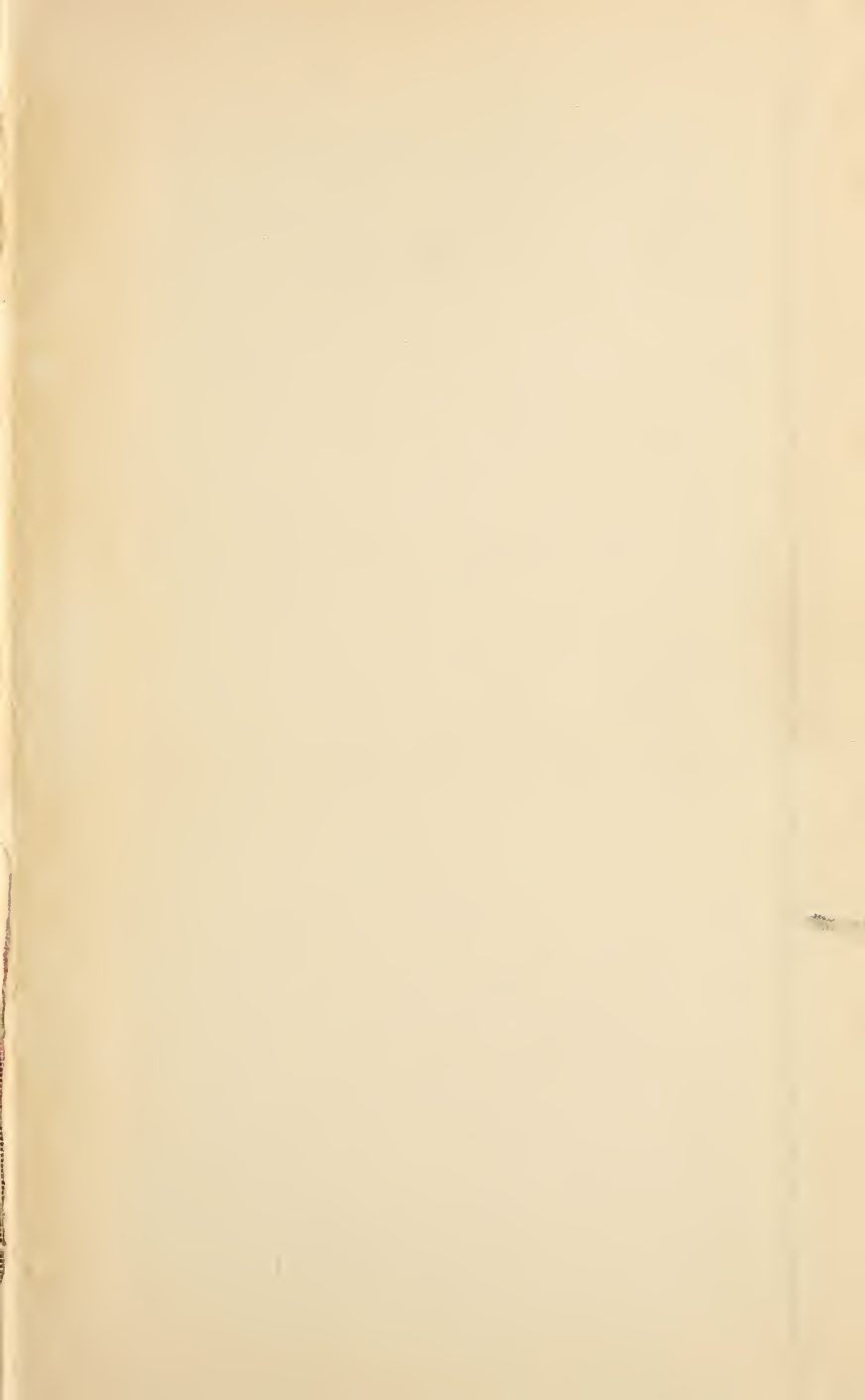
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